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TO LEEWARD

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BY

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“MR. ISAACS,” “DR. CLAUDIUS,” AND “A ROMAN SINGER”

TWO VOLS.

VOL. II

SECOND EDITION

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL

LIMITED

1884

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LONDON:
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR,
BREAD STREET HILL.

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TO LEEWARD.

CHAPTER I.

DURING the four hours that elapsed between Madame de Charleroi's involuntary discovery in the afternoon and the dinner hour, she had found time to collect her thoughts and to form a plan of action.

It was absolutely necessary to do something at once, and, if possible, to understand afterwards how Leonora could have allowed herself in so short a time to fall a victim to the eloquence and personal charms of Julius Batiscombe. She wondered vaguely how it were all possible, but in the meantime she knew that the mischief existed, and that she must do

her utmost to avert its growth and frightful consequences, since she alone could be of use.

Her first impulse had been to go to the window and disclose herself, whereby she thought she could have put Batiscombe to flight instantly. He could hardly have stayed in the house with her after such a scene as would have followed. But a proud instinct forbade her; she would not have it appear that she could possibly stand to Julius in the position of Leonora's rival. Nor could she have found it in her heart to inflict on her sister-in-law the indelible disgrace of an exposure. All this passed through her mind in a moment, and checked her first step towards the window. She frightened the lovers away by upsetting her table, instead of coming upon them herself, and she knew an hour later that she had thereby lost the power of managing them by anything she could say to Batiscombe. She would not—she could not—go to Leonora and force a confession. Besides, what good would be gained? Leonora was a person to be protected, not attacked. As for Julius, she

knew perfectly well, when she led him out to the terrace while Marcantonio was up stairs, that he would deny everything. He could do nothing else, and he did it boldly, though it was of no use. But Diana thought it possible that he would leave the house without a struggle, and abandon the position for a time.

If Julius had been a less passionate man, and a more accomplished villain, if he had loved Leonora less ardently and more designingly, or if he had been less furiously angry against Diana, he would have acted differently. He would have lied just as he had done, but blandly and with a great show of astonishment ; he would have made a low bow, answering Diana that he was at all times ready to obey her, and he would have left the house in the morning, with an elaborate excuse to his hosts. But Batiscombe was quite another sort of person. One of the calmest and most diplomatic of men under ordinary circumstances, his passion when roused was wholly uncontrollable. He was madly in love, and madly angry, and he would have cheerfully fought

the whole world single-handed for the sake of his love, or of his anger, separately, let alone in the present case, when both were roused to the fiercest pitch.

Diana knew him well, and, after the few words she had exchanged with him on the terrace, she knew what to expect. And she had foreseen the possibility of his refusal to leave the villa, and was prepared for it. The only question of difficulty was to direct Marcantonio's whole anger against Batiscombe, and to shield Leonora as far as possible — but Marcantonio must be told of the danger, since Diana alone was unable to avert it.

She sat beside him on the deep sofa in the drawing-room, and she laid her hand affectionately on his, as though to give him some strength to bear what was in store.

"It is very important," she said, "and you must be very patient. You must give me your word that you will do nothing violent for at least a day, for you will be very angry." She knew that, with all his good nature, she could rely on his courage. He was not easily

frightened, after all. He looked earnestly at her, and his face was drawn into a look of determination that sat oddly on his delicate and rather weak features.

“Speak, Diana *mia*,” he said simply. “I will do what I can for you.” He supposed, of course, that something had occurred between herself and Batiscombe.

“It is not I,” she said, “it is you who are concerned.”

“I?” repeated her brother, in some astonishment.

“Yes. You are the person who must act in the matter. You must write a little note to Batiscombe, and tell him that your wife’s sudden illness——”

“What? But it is only a little sun—a mere headache,” interrupted Marcantonio.

“No matter;—that your wife’s sudden illness is so severe that you must beg him to postpone the remainder of his visit to some future time.”

Marcantonio looked more and more astonished.

“But I only asked him for a week. He

will go of his own accord to-morrow or the day after. I am sorry, Diana *mia*, but you said you did not mind meeting him." He spoke seriously, with a puzzled expression on his face.

"It makes no difference," said Diana. "He must go to-morrow morning. He has not behaved honourably to you since he has been in the house."

Her brother looked suddenly very grave, and his voice dropped as he spoke.

"Has he insulted you, Diana," he asked.

"Yes," said she, in low tones, "he has insulted me. But he has done worse, he has insulted your wife in my hearing."

Marcantonio turned suddenly on the sofa, and grasped his sister's arm like a vice. His face turned a ghastly colour, and his voice trembled violently.

"Diana—are you telling me the truth?"

Her grey eyes turned honestly and bravely to him.

"You and I never learned to tell lies, Marcantonio. It is true."

She knew well enough that he would

never suspect his wife, or ask a question that could lead to such a conclusion. When she said that Batiscombe had insulted Leonora, she spoke the absolute truth. What greater insult can man offer an honest woman than by wittingly forcing upon her an unlawful love?

Marcantonio looked at her one moment, and then sprang to his feet. At that instant he would have killed Julius Batiscombe with his hands, as perhaps Diana herself could have done. She seized his hand as he stood, and drew him toward her.

“No,” she said, understanding his thought, “remember your promise. You must do nothing now—except write the note.”

But Carantoni was in no condition to write notes. He broke away, and walked wildly up and down the room, wringing his hands together, and muttering furious ejaculations. He was too angry, too much surprised, too much horrified at his own stupidity throughout the affair to be able to think clearly. Diana sat motionless on the sofa, as angry, perhaps, as he, in her own way, but full of pity and

sympathy for him, and trying to devise some means of helping him. She leaned forward, resting her chin on her hand, and her eyes followed him anxiously in his quick, irregular walk. And as she looked he seemed gradually to fall under her influence, and went and sat in a deep chair away from her, and buried his face.

Then Diana rose, and went to the table in the corner and arranged the light, and wrote herself the note to Batiscombe, leaving a blank at the foot for a signature. She looked round, and saw her brother watching her.

"Come, dear boy," she said kindly, "I have written the note for you; sign it, and I will see that he gets it in the morning."

Marcantonio rose and came to her with uncertain steps. He put his hand on her shoulder a moment. Then he fell on his knees beside her, and pressed her close to him, silently. Presently he rose, she put the pen between his fingers, still trembling with his anger, and he signed the note as best he could. She put it into an envelope, sealed it, and directed it to Julius Batiscombe.

“He will be out of the house before we are up,” she said in a tone of certainty. “Go to bed, dear boy, and never let him trouble your peace again.”

“But I will trouble his peace,” answered Marcantonio, bending his smooth brows.

“We will see about that afterwards,” said Diana. “If you think best to fight him, I will not oppose you; but we will talk about it. We cannot talk now. Good-night, my dear, dear brother.”

She kissed him on the forehead and held both his hands for a moment, and then led him away. He obeyed mechanically, and they parted for the night.

Diana often wished her brother were a stronger man in the ordinary things of life, but she knew that he was honest, and no coward in danger, and that he always spoke the truth and kept his word. It was his fault that he always imagined every one to be as honest as himself until the contrary was proved—after which he never trusted the man again.

Diana went slowly to her room and locked

the door behind her. With a candle in her hand she entered the boudoir and looked round upon the scene of the catastrophe. The glass of the long window was still open, and the refractory blinds still closed, the bolts rusted in, beyond her strength to draw them. The servants had raised the desk upright and washed away the ink from the tiles, and there was no trace of disorder visible. She could hardly realise that in this neat room, that very day, only a few hours ago, she had passed through one of the most terrible experiences of her life.

She sat down in the chair before the desk and bent her queenly head. She had done her best for the right through that day, but it had all gone by so very quickly that she doubted whether she had done wisely. It seemed as though the burden of it all rested upon her—of the right and of the wrong; and the burden was very heavy. May God in his mercy give strength and courage to all brave women doing the right!

I think that ordinary women have more

moral vanity than ordinary men; but that very good men have more of it than very good women. A good man always seems to have a conviction of goodness, to be quite sure when he has done right, and to enjoy the sense of having done it. A woman's sympathies are wider and reach further than a man's. When she has done her best, there always is something more that she would do if she could, and until that is done also she can never feel the comfortable delight in godliness experienced by man, the grosser creature, who hedges his possibilities more closely, and gets rid of his superfluous aspirations by the logical demonstration of the unattainable. But the sphere of ordinary women is narrower, and their sympathies are dispersed in a greater multiplicity and divergence of small channels, so that a little goodness, a little easy charity with a pretty name, is a luscious tit-bit to the tongue that speaketh vanity.

It was a dreary night to every one of the four—least of all perhaps to Julius Batiscombe,

whose fierce temper was thoroughly roused and would not be calmed again for days, giving him a kind of wicked satisfaction while it lasted. He spent most of the night at his window, smoking and going over the scenes of the day, and the scenes of the future. His mind ran in the direction of fighting—to fight any one or any thing would be a rare satisfaction, and ever as he fancied some struggle possible the hot blood rushed to his temples and longed for action, so that he bit his cigar through and through, and clasped his hands together till the veins stood out like ropes. He slept a little at last, and dreamed savage dreams of hand-to-hand combat, and woke with the roar of cannon in his ears. For he was a man of exaggerated fancies when his brain worked unconsciously, like many men who have ended in celebrity or in insane asylums.

The roar of the guns was only a servant knocking at his door, with hot water and a note. He saw Diana's handwriting, and suspected a new move, so that he was not altogether astonished by the contents. He

understood that she had made Marcantonio sign her writing—by what means, he could not tell—in order to force the position. There was evidently nothing to be done but to go. He would not have left the villa for anything Diana could have said, in his present humour, but it was impossible to bid defiance to the master of the house. Besides, he supposed that since Carantoni had invited him to leave, Diana had said something which would lead to a challenge from her brother, which could naturally not take place under his own roof.

He read the note through twice, and he went through his toilet with his usual care, looking angrily at himself in the glass as he shaved, but gradually composing his features to an appearance of calmness. Then he put his things together, rang the bell, told the servant he was going to Sorrento on business, and gave him a very handsome fee, requesting him to bring the things in the course of the day, in a cab, to the hotel. As Batiscombe was always very liberal, the servant smiled, promised to obey, and retired;

after which Julius took his hat and stick, and strolled out of the house toward the town.

Donna Diana and Marcantonio met in the morning. They saluted each other with the quiet, mournful understanding of people who have a common trouble, which they know must be spoken of, though they desire to put off the evil moment. They were both pale, and Diana's eyes were shaded by great dark rings that spoke of a sleepless night.

"Have you seen Leonora? How is she?" was her first question.

"*Dio mio!* She is very poorly. *Poverina!* It has made a terrible impression on her. Of course I did not speak of the subject."

"Of course." Diana sighed and looked drearily at the window, as though she wished she were outside, away, and beyond this trouble. She could not know what Leonora would say or do if Marcantonio ever broached the subject. "I do not think," said she, "that it will ever be necessary to say anything about it. She will understand that you sent him out of the house—she will never see him again."

“Is he gone?” asked Marcantonio.

“Yes—early this morning. I sent to find out.”

“Then there need be no time lost,” said her brother. “I have just written a note to Monsieur de Tierce, at Castellamare. It is much better to have a Frenchman in dealing with foreigners. He will be here by one o’clock; and will arrange everything.”

Diana had expected that Marcantonio would send for a friend to arrange matters with Batiscombe. She did not look surprised.

“Have you sent the man yet?” she asked.

“He is getting a horse, I suppose. I have not heard him go.”

“Tell him to wait five minutes. This is a serious affair, and we had better act deliberately.”

Diana intended to prevent the duel if possible. Marcantonio was willing to humour her, and went out to stop the man. When he came back, she made him sit down beside her.

She explained to him the situation very clearly. Batiscombe had insulted Leonora,

had done him a mortal offence. But Batiscombe was not the important person in the case. Leonora was the important person. If matters had been different, if, for instance, a man had run away with another man's wife, then, of course, they must necessarily fight—and the woman made no difference, since her reputation would be already destroyed. But it would be a terrible injury to a young wife to have her husband fighting a duel about her before they had been married three months. People always say there is not much smoke without a little fire; society, being generally averse to standing up to be shot at, says that a man in Marcantonio's position would not go out unless he had very serious cause. Of course it would say in this case that the cause lay with Leonora, that she should never have allowed a man enough intimacy to give him a chance of insulting her, and so forth, and so on.

Diana would not use the argument of the Church's prohibition of duelling. She knew that Leonora's welfare was the chiefest thing

present in her brother's mind, and that if she could show him that, for Leonora's sake, he ought to leave Batiscombe alone, he would assuredly conquer his anger and his pride. He had no sanguine and combative instincts, like Julius; he did not like fighting for the enjoyment of it, and if he could be shown that his anger was unwise, he would ultimately get the better of it, now that the first sharp moment of wrath was over. To preserve Leonora's spotless fame was a much more important thing than to punish an insolent foreigner for vainly attempting to damage it, and thereby calling the attention of the world to the fact that her reputation was capable of damage.

It was a hard fight, and Diana's patience never wearied through the hours they talked together. More than once she thought it was lost, and that Marcantonio would order the note to be despatched. Nothing but the real affection and trust that existed between her and her brother made it possible for her to succeed. But at last he was convinced, and

silently went out and got the note he had written to Monsieur de Tierce, and tore it up before his sister. The die was cast, and he did not mention the subject again, but went to see his wife. At her door he was told by her maid that Leonora was asleep, which was not true. But he asked no questions, and retired to his own room to solace himself as he might. He was too deeply distressed to wonder why Diana did not go to Leonora and sit with her.

Leonora had hardly spoken to any one since she had parted with Batiscombe on the previous evening before dinner. At table, as has been seen, she said little, and no one had seen her since except her husband, who had gone to her in the morning. After his visit she rang for her maid and told her to see that no one disturbed her, as she was going to sleep again and would ring when she wanted anything.

At the moment when her husband was told she was not visible she was sitting in her dressing-room, just behind the closed blinds of the window, listening to the monotonous dry hum of the locusts in the garden, and wondering

whether anything would ever happen again in the world. She was utterly dishevelled, her rich hair falling to her shoulders and half way to the ground in wildest disorder, the gay coloured ribbons of her peignoir all untied and ruffled; her bare feet half thrust into her gold-embroidered slippers; her hands lying idly in her lap as though there were nothing more for them to do. A strange wild figure, sitting there surrounded by all the gorgeous little properties and knick-knacks of a great lady's toilet.

Batiscombe was gone! Her husband had told her that he had been requested to postpone the remainder of his visit indefinitely. Of course he had gone, then. Marcantonio had supposed she would understand and be well satisfied. But she had only turned and hidden her face in the pillow—as was perhaps natural to a very young woman when her husband mentioned anything that gave her a sense of shame. She must have been very much hurt by the insult, whatever it was, and she could not bear to hear it mentioned. Marcantonio had not told his

sister of this, thinking it would be indelicate, and was nobody's business but his own and his wife's.

Batiscombe was gone—when would she see him again? How could he reach her, or she him? What would life be like without him? And then the dazed, disappointed, terrified look came again to her face, and she stared at nothing, vacantly, and like a woman beside herself.

And oh, that other thought! How much did Marcantonio know? It was Diana, of course, who made that frightful noise—she could hear the crash still sounding in her ears. She had remembered too late that one corner room, cut off from all the others opening on the terrace, and communicating from within with Diana's bedroom—oh, the folly of it! If only Diana were to come to her—she could kill her, she thought! She was not so tall, perhaps, but she was much stronger—she was sure she could kill her! But how much did Marcantonio know? Diana was so truthful, she must have told him all. Those hateful people who always speak the truth! Ah, if only Batiscombe could come back—or

see her one moment before he went. But he was gone already. If he could have seen her this morning, she might have arranged—it was impossible yesterday afternoon, he was so wild, so furiously, gloriously angry. It did her good to think of his blazing eyes, and strong, set teeth just showing between his parted lips. He was such a man among men! Never again—never—never, perhaps! She would be shut up—made a prisoner—Heaven only knew what was in store for her! Dreary, hopeless, no light, no life—no anything.

Hollow? She laughed dismally to herself. Yes, life was hollow indeed, now—empty of all joy, or peace, or rest, for ever and ever. Pray? How could she pray? Prayer was an innocent amusement for *désœuvrées* young women, with imaginary sins and plenty of time. But now—bah! nothing was further from her thoughts. What could Heaven do for her? Heaven would certainly not give her Batiscombe again. It would be wrong—ha! ha!—of course it was wrong; but what was life without him? What had all her life

been as compared with the happiness of the last fortnight, culminating in the happiness of yesterday? It might be wrong, but it was life; and all before had been mere existence—a miserable, vegetable, hopeless existence.

The day dragged on; she took no thought of the hours, or that she had taken neither food nor drink since the night before. And always the maid outside the door said she was asleep.

At five o'clock she could bear it no longer, but rang the bell and said she would dress, as she felt much better. The maid told her that one of the men had returned from Sorrento and wished to see her excellency, as he had executed a commission for her.

Leonora stared a moment, guessed there was something behind the message, and ordered the man to go into her sitting-room, whither she presently went, wrapped in a voluminous dressing-gown, that completely hid her disarranged peignoir. The man handed her a small parcel and waited. She turned her back, and, opening it, found a little olive-wood box,

and inside that there was a small note with no address or name on it. She hastily closed the box again, and, turning carelessly, so that the man could see her, she examined it by the window, as though criticising the workmanship. She nodded to the man to go, but he stood looking at her with a queer expression that frightened her. She understood that he had examined the parcel on the way, probably ; at all events, that he must be bribed. She quickly opened a drawer of her secretary, found a purse, and gave the fellow a gold piece. He grinned, bowed his thanks, and retired. He was the man who had taken Batiscombe's things to town that afternoon.

Leonora had no experience—in novels, people always bribed the servants ; it was most likely the proper thing—the safe thing—to do. The man would not have gone away unless she had given him something, she thought.

The note was brief to terseness. It conveyed in the fewest possible words the information that the writer—name not mentioned—intended to spend the day, in future, in a small

boat *with green oars*—underlined with a very black stroke—in the vicinity of a certain landing known to both the writer and the receiver of the note—name of latter also not mentioned. And the writer added, laconically, “No fee to bearer.”

She ought to have read the note through before paying the man. But what could she have done? He had stood staring at her, until he was paid.

Her heart gave a great leap. It was so like him, so daring, to send her word at once. At least she would feel, now, that he was always there, waiting for her—ready to help her at a moment’s notice. If only she could be with him on the soft, blue water, out in the sun! She could fight now—she could face them all—for he was out there; at least, he would be there to-morrow. She went back to her bedroom, and gave herself up to her maid, and had strong tea and bread-and-butter brought to her, while she dressed; and an hour later she sallied out, with all her usual elasticity of step and motion, and all the marvellous freshness

of face that distinguished her from other women. She found her husband and Diana together on the terrace.

Marcantonio's face softened and flushed with pleasure as he saw how well and beautiful she looked. She, at least, he thought, had not suffered long by all this trouble. It was so brave of her to forget it, now that the man was gone; he was so glad to think that he could have borne the brunt of it, and had saved her the pain of any discussion. But he said little, just kissing her hand, and affectionately leading her to a comfortable chair.

Diana, who had really carried the heat of the battle alone, and bore the burden of the secret, was very quiet. She saw a little look of hardness in Leonora's face that she had seen long before, but rarely. She said kindly that she was very glad to see her up again, and hoped she was entirely recovered. Marcantonio, said Diana, had been very anxious.

For an instant the two women faced each other, and Leonora thought she was beginning to understand her sister-in-law.

CHAPTER II.

FROM morning till night, under the broiling sun of August, a wretched-looking boat plied slowly along the rocks in the neighbourhood of the Carantoni landing. It was a miserable old tub, big enough to hold three or four people at the most, and the solitary individual to whom it seemed to belong, propelled it slowly about with a pair of old green oars. Now and then he would paddle under the shadow of the cliffs and put down a line, angling for a stray mackerel or mullet, and sometimes catching even one of those sharp-finned red fellows that the Neapolitan fishermen called "cardinals." He did not seem to care much whether he caught anything or not, but he apparently loved that

particular part of the coast, for he was never seen anywhere else. A big, shabby man, in rough clothes and a half-grown, blue-black beard, with bright blue eyes—Julius Batiscombe as a fisherman—brown as a berry, and growing rough-fisted from constant handling of oars and lines and nets.

No one took any notice of him as he pottered about in his tub. The watermen, who passed and repassed, knew him as the crazy Englishman who found it amusing to bake himself all day in the sun for the sake of catching some wretched fish that he could buy in the market for half the trouble. What did they care? They never fished there themselves, because there were no fish—a very good and simple reason—and if a foolish foreigner chose to register an old boat at the little fishing harbour close by, and pay ten francs for the privilege, it was not their business. Neapolitans and their congeners do not care much for anything foreigners do, unless it happens to bring them money.

And in the evening, when it was dark, Julius

paddled away to Sorrento, and, meeting his own boat on the way, pulled off his rough clothes, jumped into the water for a swim, and dressed himself like a Christian before going ashore. Save that he was growing a beard, and was almost black with the sun, he was as much Julius Batiscombe as ever when he was on land. He had no acquaintances in the hotel, and no one cared or asked what he did with himself all day long.

It was said among the fishermen that he had been seen once or twice rowing a foreign lady about, and they laughed at the idea of a "signore" earning a franc by ferrying a passenger, just like one of themselves—for, of course, he was paid for it; it amused him, because he was crazy, *poveretto*! And sometimes he was heard singing outlandish songs to himself in the heat of the day as he paddled about under the cliffs.

The days had sped quickly since Batiscombe had left the Carantoni villa, and it was now the first week in August. Madame de Charleroi had stayed nearly a week longer than she had

intended, but at last had gone back to Pegli, to Marcantonio's great regret, and to Leonora's unspeakable relief. So long as Diana was in the house Leonora had been obliged to steal, few and far between, the occasions when she could safely go down to the rocks and signal to the shabby man with the green oars to come and take her off. Many and long and hot were the days when he rowed his poor crazy craft along from dawn to dark, without catching a sight of the strong lithe figure that he loved. But come when she would, at morning, noon, or night, he was always there, ready to take her and to slip off at a quick stroke to one of the many green caves that line the shore; and there, for an hour or two, or as long as she might safely stay, they sat and spent happy moments together, the happier for being few, forbidden, and somewhat dangerous.

As for the danger, though, there was not much of it. It would have been hard, indeed, to recognise in the ill-clad boatman, with his stubbly beard, and seedy cap of brown knitted

wool, the fine gentleman whom people stopped to look at in the street. Leonora, if any one had met her on the landing, would have said she had taken the first passing fisherman to row her about among the caves, and no one would have suspected anything; and she used to laugh as she watched the progress of his beard, knowing that each day made the disguise more complete.

Her own boat had given her some anxiety at first, but she had made Marcantonio lend the whole equipage to a friend further down the bay, telling him it was too hot to be on the water at present. And when Diana was at last gone, she had most of the day to herself; for Marcantonio was always busy with letters, or trying horses, or going to Naples. He always found his wife so extremely charming when he had been away all day, or shut up in his rooms, and so preternaturally contradictory and capricious when he was with her for long together, that he concluded she preferred a certain amount of solitude, and humoured her accordingly. Never hearing

of Batiscombe, he supposed he had left the neighbourhood for parts unknown, and though he regretted not having had an opportunity of shooting him, he knew in his heart that Diana's advice had been good, and that it was best so. Now and then, when he thought of Julius too long, he would grow angry and pace quickly up and down his room; but on the whole, life was easy and pleasant enough, and his beloved Leonora was the most charming of women, not half so capricious as some of the wives of his friends.

How long this state of things might have continued it is impossible to say, if a disturbing element had not been introduced. But the disturbing element is seldom far to seek in such cases, and in due time it came. There was a man in the service of the Marchesa Carantoni—the same whom Batiscombe had employed to take his things to Sorrento, and then to convey the note to Leonora—and the man's name was Temistocle, as arrant a knave as ever opened palm for bribe. Carantoni had taken him in Rome when he married,

because he needed another man, and the fellow's face was familiar to him. He had seen him in good houses, and had noticed his extraordinary adroitness in waiting. The man's character was not altogether satisfactory. He had received no recommendation from his last place—but Marcantonio took him on trial and brought him to Sorrento.

Temistocle had exceedingly sharp eyes, and Temistocle had an exceedingly smooth tongue—he was understood among the servants to have made economies, and his tastes were somewhat luxurious. He found Sorrento hot and dull, and he cast about for something refreshing and amusing.

To take sea-baths had always been his chiefest ambition. It sounded well to be able to say he had taken a course of sea-bathing. But the thing was by no means easy at Sorrento. He could not bathe from his master's landing, and it was a long distance to go round by the lanes to reach another descent. At last, however, he discovered that he could climb over the little point of rocks

at the foot of the Carantoni villa, and reach a small cove, where, in complete seclusion, he might enjoy himself as he pleased. Accordingly, when he had finished serving the mid-day breakfast he used to make a practice of going down to bathe. In his little cove he hid his clothes carefully among the rocks and crept into the water under the deep shadow of the overhanging cliff. He could not swim a stroke, but he could sit just so that the water came up to his chin, and his round black bullet head lay on the surface like a floating football, scarcely visible to any one passing by outside in the sun. From this position it amused Temistocle to watch the boats and the fishermen for an hour or two, enjoying the idea that they never dreamed of his presence.

It chanced often, as he sat in the water, that Julius, in his outlandish costume, paddled his old boat past Temistocle's retreat; and the sharp eyes of the Roman servant were not long in discovering that the fisherman was no fisherman at all. It was the easier to recognise Batiscombe as the man saw him

when his beard was only a few days old. From that day Temistocle watched his opportunity to descend when the boat with the green oars had just passed, and would be out of the way for some time.

There was never the smallest doubt in his mind of Batiscombe's intention in thus disguising himself. The incident of the parcel, which he had carefully opened and examined, Batiscombe's sudden departure, and Leonora's simultaneous indisposition, all combined in his mind into one harmonious whole, from which he proposed to himself to extract at least a reasonable amount of honey.

One day he was rewarded for his pains. The boat passed very near to the mouth of his water-den, skirting the rocks at a great pace. He just saw that Leonora was seated in the stern, and he incontinently ducked his black head, and kept under water till he thought he must have drowned. When at last he was obliged from sheer suffocation to bring his mouth to the air, they were gone, and Temistocle sprang out of the water like some

dark evil genius of a low order, waiting for Mr. Darwin to evolve him into the advanced condition of complete devildom. He was not long in dressing, and in a few minutes he had got back to the landing, clambering quickly over the rocks, and hurting himself, in his haste, at every step.

After that, he became more irregular in his habits, lurking in secret places till he saw Leonora going toward the descent at the end of the garden, and presently following her at a safe distance. He ascertained, as he had expected, that Batiscombe spent his whole time within hail of the landing, in the boat with the green oars, and that Leonora went down and signalled to him, whenever she had a chance. Temistocle was so delighted with the skill of the arrangement that for a long time he could not prevail upon himself to interrupt it, even for the sake of the bribe that must inevitably follow. But, one day, he needed money, and he did not want to encroach upon his purse of savings, for he was a miserly wretch as

well as a knave. He had seen something pretty, in the way of a gorgeous silk cap, that a stray pedlar had brought among other things, and he thought he would enjoy bargaining for it the next time the pedlar came with his wares. He knew that he would probably bargain for an hour and then not buy it after all—but nevertheless he might be weak, and then he would like to feel that he had got the thing out of his betters by his own skill, instead of squandering money from his hoard. He seldom indulged in the luxury of buying what he fancied, but when he did he generally made some one else pay for it. There was a certain refinement of miserliness about him.

At first he imagined that it would be best to drop some hint to his mistress, just enough to frighten her into paying for his silence. But his calmer reflection told him that he would be thereby killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. Batiscombe's ingenuity would make some change in the arrangements and he would have to begin all over again.

Evidently the best thing was to make his master pay, and let the lovers go quietly on their course, so that he could at any time produce evidence of his veracity. He watched his opportunity. Marcantonio often inquired whether the Signora were in the house, or were gone out. If she was out he supposed she had gone into the garden or to pay visits—he never disturbed her arrangements, knowing how much she enjoyed being perfectly free, and feeling sure she would not get into mischief. She made a point of calling on everybody, telling him afterwards where she had been, and the two or three hours she spent with Julius escaped notice in her clever account of the spending of the day. Now and then she would say she had been down to the rocks, in case her husband should ever take it into his head to go and find her there, and she was quite sure that by this time Julius was changed beyond recognition.

Temistocle had not long to wait. One day in August, Marcantonio chanced to inquire of him where the Marchesa might be. Temistocle

was prepared—with the utmost gravity and respect he dealt his blow, speaking as though he were saying the most natural thing in the world.

“I suppose,” he said, “that her excellency is gone out in the boat with the Signor Batiscombe;” he pronounced all the letters of the name, as though it had been Italian; but it was unmistakable. Marcantonio turned upon him in amazement.

“Animal!” he exclaimed, “are you drunk?”

“I, eccellenza?” cried Temistocle in hurt tones. “I drunk? Heaven forbid.”

“Then you are crazy,” remarked Marcantonio, more and more astonished. “The Signor Batiscombe is no longer here.”

“Pardon me, eccellenza,” retorted the servant respectfully. “I imagined that your excellency knew. The Signor Batiscombe comes every day, and takes the Signora Marchesa out in a boat. He is become a very strange signore, for he dresses like a fisherman, and has let his beard grow as long as this—*così*,” the man explained, holding his hand a few inches from

his face. "*Mi maraviglio, io!*" he exclaimed, casting his eyes to the ground.

Marcantonio was speechless with amazement and horror, and turned his back on the servant. A man less thoroughly a gentleman in every sense would have fallen upon Temistocle and beaten him, then and there. By a great effort, Marcantonio collected himself, and turned again.

"You have not to make any remarks upon the appearance of the Signor Batiscombe," he said briefly. "*Basta!*" Temistocle had nothing left but to bow and leave the room. He did not understand his master in the least—he was just like a foreigner, he thought.

But Marcantonio dropped into an armchair, the moment he was alone, as though all the strength and life were suddenly gone from him. He could not in the least realise the extent of the revelation contained in Temistocle's words. He did not know what to do, in the least, and for the moment it did not even strike him that there was anything to be done. In the course of half an hour,

he grew calmer and began to review the situation.

He remembered distinctly every word of Diana's concerning the trouble when Batiscombe was in the house. Diana had said very distinctly that Julius had insulted Leonora—and Diana always spoke the truth. Marcantonio had not asked her what the insult had been. He could not bring himself to do it, and he did not want to know anything more. He would have cheerfully fought with Batiscombe on the strength of his sister's assertion—but she had persuaded him not to, and now he was sorry for it.

The servant had spoken with an air of conviction, as though he thought it quite natural, and only wondered at Batiscombe's strange appearance. There could not be any doubt about it at all.

A new sensation took possession of Marcantonio—an utterly new passion, which he did not recognise in the least as part of himself. He was jealous. He did not, he would not, understand the truth, but he would prevent

his wife from ever seeing Julius Batiscombe again, and then he would go in search of him and wreak his vengeance without stint. At the same time he hoped he might avoid a scene with Leonora. He was brave enough to fight the man, but he shrank from telling his wife what he knew. It seemed so brutal and uncourteous, and altogether contrary to his principles.

But, after all, he ought to ascertain whether Temistocle were right—whether Julius really disguised himself. He would go and see.

No, he could not do that! He could not play the spy upon his wife—it was low, ignoble, unworthy. He would find some other way. His brain swam and it seemed too much for him. He grasped the arm of the chair and rose to his feet in pure desperation, feeling that he must get out of the way, into his own rooms for a while, lest any one should see him in his present state.

In the hall Marcantonio paused a moment, holding his hand to his head, as though it hurt him, and as he waited the door opened,

and Leonora faced him, beaming with light, and life, and happiness. Marcantonio looked at her one instant, and tried to speak—he would have said something courteous, from force of habit; but the words choked him, and losing all control of himself he turned and fled up the stairs, leaving his wife staring in blank amazement.

Poor fellow! she thought, he had probably got a touch of the sun. She hastened to her room and sent to inquire if the signore were ill, and if she might come to him. They brought back word that he was dressing, and that nothing was the matter. Then Leonora felt a cold chill descend to her heart, the dreadful presentiment of a real terror, not far distant. But when she met her husband in the evening at dinner, she did not dare to refer to his strange behaviour in the hall.

During dinner he talked much as usual, except that he did not laugh at all, and seemed very grave. There was a preternatural calm about him that increased Leonora's fears. She knew him so little that she could not

be sure what he would do, whether anything had really occurred, or whether he was subject to fits of insanity. He had looked like a madman in the afternoon.

When they were alone, he offered her his arm and led her out into the air, and they sat down side by side in deep chairs. Marcantonio leisurely lighted a cigarette, and puffed a few minutes in silence.

“Leonora,” he said at last, “I have heard a curious thing, and I must tell you immediately.” His voice was even and cold—his whole manner was different from anything she remembered in her experience of him; he was more imposing, altogether more of a man and stronger. Leonora trembled violently, knowing instinctively that he had discovered something. She did not speak, but let him continue.

“I chanced to inquire if you were at home this afternoon, and the man said he supposed you were gone out in the boat with Mr. Batiscombe, as you did every day. Is it true? The man who told me said it as

though it were quite natural — as though every one in the house knew it except myself.”

Leonora was dumb for a moment. The whole thing was so suddenly thrown on her that she was taken off her guard, besides being thoroughly frightened at her husband’s terrible calmness, so unlike himself under ordinary circumstances. She lay back in her low chair and tried to collect her thoughts.

“The man had also observed,” continued Marcantonio, turning his keen dark eyes upon her, “that Monsieur Batiscombe had a beard and was dressed like a fisherman. *En effet*, it was extremely curious.”

Marcantonio and his sister always spoke the truth; Batiscombe never lied in his life to save himself, but could do it boldly when it was absolutely necessary to save some one else. He had no principle about it, except that cowards told lies, and men did not—that was the way he put it. He was not afraid of anything himself, but for a woman he would perjure himself by all the oaths in Christendom. It was his idea of chivalry to women and could not

altogether be blamed. But Leonora by a long apprenticeship to a very worldly mother, and owing to the singular confusion of her ideas, had acquired a moral obliquity, which she defended to herself on the ground that the ultimate results she obtained were intended to be good. The telling of untruths, she argued, was in itself neither good nor bad ; it was the consequences that must be considered. But as the consequences of lies are not easily cast up into totals of good and bad from the starting point, it sometimes occurred that she got herself into trouble. However, she was not hampered by prejudice, and she was a very clever woman, much cleverer than the great majority, and she was just now in a very hard position. In a few minutes she had made up her mind, and she answered Marcantonio fluently enough.

“ Why,” said she calmly, “ should I not go out with Mr. Batiscombe when I please ? If he chooses to dress like a fisherman I suppose he has the right.”

Marcantonio was rather taken aback at her sudden confession. He had expected a denial

—but there she sat as calmly as possible, telling him to his face that it was all true. However, he was not likely to lose his nerve again now that he was face to face with the difficulty.

“It appears to me, Leonora,” he said, “that when I have turned a man out of my house for insulting you, it is sufficient reason——”

“For insulting *me*?” exclaimed Leonora in well-feigned astonishment. “Mr. Batiscombe never insulted *me*! You must be dreaming.” She laughed a small dry laugh. But Marcantonio was not so easily put off.

“My sister,” said he, “told me that Batiscombe insulted you in her hearing. I have always known my sister to speak the truth. Perhaps you will explain.”

“What explanation do you want? You sent Mr. Batiscombe out of the house on the pretence that I was ill. Of course Diana made you do it—I do not know how, nor what she said. You must talk it over with her. She was probably sick of him and wanted him out of the way.” Leonora spoke scornfully and

almost brutally, and Marcantonio's blood began to grow hot.

"That is absurd," he said instantly. "Perhaps Monsieur Batiscombe would not object to being confronted with me for five minutes?"

"I am sure he would not object," said Leonora without hesitation. She was quite certain of her lover's courage, at all events. She knew he would face anybody.

"Meanwhile," said Marcantonio, "you will oblige me by giving up your harmless habit of going out with him every day. I would have supposed that you would at least have had the pride to deny it, after what occurred when he was here." Marcantonio was angry, but he reasoned rightly.

"You would have preferred that I should lie to you, *mon cher*?" said his wife disdainfully, in the full virtue of having told half the truth—the first half.

"I would not permit myself to apply such a word to anything you say," answered Marcantonio with cold courtesy. "But I would have you observe that you are mistaken with regard

to my sister, and that if she told me she heard the man insult you, he did. Perhaps you did not understand what he said. It is the same. You will not meet him again at the rocks—nor anywhere else.”

“*Pourquoi donc ?* Why shall I not meet him ?” she inquired, raising her eyebrows in disdain.

“Because I forbid you.” He spoke shortly, as if that ended the matter.

Leonora shrugged her shoulders a little with an expression of pity, and shifted her position, so as to face him.

“You forbid me, do you ?” she asked, lowering her voice.

“*Mais oui !* I forbid you to see him anywhere.”

“Do you know what you are saying ?” she asked again, and there was a tone of menace in her words.

“Oh, perfectly,” answered her husband calmly ; “and I will also take care that you obey me—*bien entendu !*”

“Then it is war ?” asked Leonora, as though she hoped it might be, and to the knife.

“If you disobey, it is war,” said Marcantonio, “but you will not.”

“Why not?”

“Because I will prevent you. It is useless to prolong this discussion.”

“*Mon Dieu*, I ask nothing better than to finish it as soon as possible,” said Leonora.

“In that case, good night,” replied Marcantonio, rising.

“Good night,” answered Leonora, still seated. “I am not sleepy yet. You are not afraid that Monsieur Batiscombe will be announced after you are gone to bed?” She spoke scornfully, as though trying to drive a wound with every word. She thought she knew her husband, and she felt triumphant.

Marcantonio did not answer, but bowed to the ground and departed. In a few hours his whole character had developed, and he was a very different man from the Marcantonio of that morning. He had passed through a few hours of a desperate crisis, and had come out of it with an immovable determination to clear

up the whole affair, and to force his wife to break off her intimacy with Batiscombe. Even now he could believe no evil—only the foolish infatuation of a young woman for a man who had the romantic faculty strongly developed. It would cost an effort to break it off—and Leonora would be very much annoyed, of course—but it must be done. And so Marcantonio had gone about it in the boldest and simplest way, by attacking her directly. He congratulated himself, for at one stroke he had ascertained the truth of the servant's statement, and had gone through the much dreaded scene with his wife. Henceforth she knew what to expect; he had declared himself as a jealous husband, and had said he would be obeyed. He went to bed in the consciousness that he had done the best thing possible under the circumstances, and promising himself an early explanation with Batiscombe.

But for all the success of this first move, he was wretchedly unhappy. He still loved Leonora, as he would always love her, whatever she did,

with all his might and main, though he saw well enough that she did not love him. But he was furiously jealous, and he swore by all the saints in the calendar, that she should never love any one else. His jealousy had made a man of him.

CHAPTER III.

IT was clear that after what had passed between Leonora and her husband, the relations must assume the aspect diplomatically described as “strained”—to say the least of it. The two met many times in the course of the day, and never referred to the subject of their difference, but Leonora was well aware that she was watched. If ever she sallied out into the garden, hoping to escape observation, her husband was at hand, offering to accompany her. She once even went so far as to go down some distance with him towards the rocks, she could not tell why—perhaps because it would have been a comfort to her to catch a glimpse of Julius in the boat. But

he was probably lurking behind the rocks, just out of sight, and she could not see him. She knew that he still kept his watch during half the day, not having yet invented a better plan—for she was in correspondence with him—and in the meanwhile, until new arrangements could be made, there was a bare chance that she might escape for a moment in the morning and be able to see him. Her husband never left her side in the afternoon.

Temistocle, the knave, had failed in his attempt to gain Marcantonio's favour, as has been seen, but he now reaped a golden harvest from the lovers who paid him handsomely for carrying letters, with a reckless feeling that if he betrayed them the deluge might come—but that without him they were utterly cut off from each other. He had at first carefully opened one or two letters and skillfully closed them again, but had desisted on finding that they were written in English, a language he unfortunately did not understand. It was now his business to encourage the correspondence to the best of his ability, in

order that whenever it should be convenient to spring the mine, he might have some letter passing through his hands, which he could show to Marcantonio. He made a bargain with an old man who had a little donkey cart, to hang about the lane leading to the villa in the afternoon hours, when Temistocle being free from the cares of the pantry, found it convenient to play postman. As the distance was considerable and as Batiscombe always gave him a gold piece for a letter, and Leonora another, he thought he could afford himself ten sous a day for the hire of his primitive cab, without any reckless extravagance.

The first letter he had carried was to Batiscombe. Leonora informed him briefly of the scene with her husband, and begged that he would wait as usual for a few days, or until something better could be devised. But he waited in vain. Then he wrote and proposed that she should drive somewhere and meet him. But she answered that her husband always drove with her

when she went out. He proposed to get into the garden at night, to scale her window—anything. But Marcantonio had brought a brace of abominable English terriers who howled as though they had swallowed a banshee. Marcantonio also kept pistols, and slept with his windows open.

Meanwhile Marcantonio would have given anything to catch Batiscombe and call upon him for an explanation—but he was afraid to leave his wife for an hour, lest she should have an opportunity of going down to the sea. He could never be quite certain whether Batiscombe were there or not, for the latter had grown cautious and lay very quietly in his boat just out of sight, knowing that Leonora would call if she wanted him, according to the agreement, and he only came in the morning now and waited till twelve o'clock, in order to be at home to receive her letters in the afternoon. Yet Marcantonio would not employ a spy to watch whether Batiscombe were on the water. He could not do that—it was too utterly mean and *bourgeois*.

Leonora grew pale and thin. She was as thoroughly in love with Julius as a woman of strong temper and impulse can be with the first man she has ever cared for. She dreamed of him, thought of him, longed for him, during every hour of the day and night. He was to her the realisation of the strongest fancy of her life, the passionate, ruthless, all-daring lover; and the consciousness of utter wrong that underlay her feelings only lent the strength of moral desperation to her passion. Having lost all right to other things she had that left, and only that, on which to rely for all the happiness the world owed her. She would go to the end of it, and enjoy it all, now that she had found it; and then—then she would die, she said to herself, and no one should suffer by her fault. But she was long past the elementary stage, when love can be put upon a block and modelled and shaped with tools, or pulled to pieces, at will, being as yet but a fragile clay sketch and very yielding. The clay had been done into marble, and the marble set up in the

inmost sanctuary of the temple—and if the idol were broken the pieces could not be joined, and the temple would be empty and bare for ever. It had come about very quickly—but what of that? Who shall say that passion born in a moment, ready armed, is not so strong and enduring as that which is evolved like man from a pitiful thing with a tail—a mere flirtation, to the semblance of humanity, to the godlike presence of true love?

Or who will tell us that love is less a real thing, because it is evil instead of being good? Bah! Devils are quite as real as angels, as I have no doubt many of us will find in due time. Do not underrate the strength of a thing because it is bad, nor doubt its reality because you do not like its looks.

Leonora was in love with all her might, and it makes no difference in the effect upon the individual whether love is lawful or not, so long as it is thwarted and opposed at every turn. Her character, from being vague and indistinct, reaching out after many things, and never wholly grasping any, had suddenly

become definite and full of a mature purpose—the purpose to love Julius recklessly, without consideration or question. The one real thing which remained possible for her had come, dominating and crushing down the army of her most favourite unrealities. The man she loved stood out from the chaotic darkness of the past and from the dreary shadows of the present, as a glorious figure of light, magnificent in all that could be noblest; and she gave to him her soul, her life and her strength, without hesitation and without fear. She had no remorse, no pity for her husband, no present consciousness of sin, for she was too near the wrong, and too new to it, not to enjoy it.

The traditional hardened sinner, the very monstrosity and arch-deformity of complicated vice, held up by preachers as a bugbear and a moral scarecrow to the young, the creature without heart, conscience, or capacity of good, does not enjoy his wickedness in the least. It has lost its novelty for him and its sharp, peppery savour. The people who really enjoy it are young; they are those who have tasted

little of life, and have yet all the sensibility and refinement of palate that can distinguish between one sauce and another—between green, red, and black pepper. They have dreamed of the pepper, have never been allowed to have it, and have been fed on a kind of moral pap that disagreed with them from childhood. Suddenly the spice is within their reach, and they make to themselves a glorious feast of hot things, vaguely hoping that they will recover from the indigestion before they are found out. And sometimes they do, though the recovery is very painful—and sometimes they do not.

Leonora had subsisted on what she could get in the way of enjoyment, but her capacity far exceeded the supply that presented itself. She was not one of those people who can live for days in happiness from one sight of something beautiful, from a glimpse at a great picture, or from the memory of one strain of music. She liked all that was artistic, and especially that which was admirable for novelty, fineness of execution, or boldness of conception. She was not impressed with the beauty

of small and unpretending things—the art that amused her was necessarily of the most brilliant kind. The people she liked were the stirring, active, original people who either make history or make public fools of themselves, or both. The philosophies she had dabbled in were such as could produce in her a sensation of odd possibility rather than such as could satisfy a logical intellect, and they resolved themselves into a vast sea of aspirations, emotions, and potential passions, in which she loved to disport herself, diving, and splashing and floating, like a magnificent sea-nymph in fullest enjoyment of her wild vitality—sitting, an hour after, on some lonely rock, and wringing her white hands to heaven in despair because, being but half divine, she was less goddess-like than the great goddesses of Olympus.

She could not help it if she grew pale and thin—she was so wretched without him—and, without his letters and the sense that he was not so very far from her after all, she would have gone mad. She would sit for hours in her room staring at nothing; or she would go

through elaborate processes of toilet before the glass, looking at herself and wondering if he would find her changed—perhaps that very day some chance would offer, she might see him. Everything was possible. That was the colour he liked best, and that bit of jewelry—put it on, in case he should come. And again she would change it all, because she would not wear for her husband the things she wore for her sweet lover; and then she would change once more, perhaps, and put back the colours and the ornaments he loved, so that she might the better think of him while she was with Marcantonio; she had a thousand idle thoughts and fancies which she strove hard to train into the semblance of a little happiness, the hollowest image of a little joy.

The days came and went miserably for nearly a fortnight. In all that time Marcantonio watched her closely, never relaxing in his vigilance. She might have escaped perhaps, but she would have been missed in half an hour, and she had not the courage to do anything so desperate—the time must come, she

thought, when things would change. But meanwhile she grew haggard and worn.

Marcantonio had abandoned the idea of sending for a friend to deal with Batiscombe. What he had to say could, he thought, best be said directly, and there would then be no difficulty in establishing a pretext for fighting. But first of all he must keep his wife out of danger. Feeling that he held her entirely at his mercy, he was willing to take some time for deliberation. She could not see Julius, and it would be the best possible test to ascertain how she bore the trial. Marcantonio had grown hard and calculating in his jealousy, but he ground his teeth as he watched her and saw that she was falling ill—and it was not so much for sympathy with her, as for anger that she should so love another. At last he determined upon a new course.

“Leonora,” he said, briefly, one day, “we will leave this place immediately, since it does not suit you. Will you be so amiable as to give orders to have your things packed?”

Leonora started a little, and looked at him.

It was not often she cared to look at him now.

“Why do you want to go?” she asked at last.

“Because, as I said, this place does not suit you. You are ill—miserable. *Ma foi!* do you think I will allow you to stay in a place where you are always pale and eat nothing?”

“I am not ill,” said she, “and I have a very good appetite. I do not want to go away. Besides, you have taken the villa for the whole summer. It would be such a useless waste of money to move again.”

“Ah! you become economical. It is very well; but economy does not enter into this case at all. We will go to Cadenabbia, or to any place in the lakes, where it is far cooler.”

“I do not mind the heat,” said Leonora, “as you know. Why not say at once that you are tired of Sorrento and want to go away to please yourself? It would be much simpler and more honest.”

“Pardon me, *ma chère*, I am perfectly well

here. I could spend the rest of my life at Sorrento. But you are not well—whatever the cause may be—and there is a possibility that you may be better elsewhere. *Done*——”

“Oh, of course,” interrupted Leonora, “if you have made up your mind I must submit. If you think you can make me more miserable anywhere else than you can here, I must let you try. I hardly think you can. You might be satisfied. Nevertheless, let us go.”

“I do not wish to make you miserable, you know perfectly. I wish to make you happy and free.”

“Free?” repeated Leonora. “*En vérité*, you have a singular fashion of making me free, to watch me day and night, as though I intended to run away with your silver. Free, indeed! Free from what?” She laughed, scornfully enough, in his face. It was the first time they had approached any subject of this kind since the memorable night after Marcantonio’s discovery. But since he had made up his mind to take her

away he was willing to undergo another scene if it were absolutely necessary.

“To make you free from the society of Monsieur Batiscombe,” answered Marcantonio boldly. “You will never be well until you are absolutely out of his reach, and if I must go to the end of the world I will accomplish that.”

“You need not insult me in words,” said Leonora, disdainfully. “You have done it quite enough already by your deeds.”

Marcantonio was silent for a moment. The speech hurt him, for he knew how he believed in her innocence, and how it was his jealousy that now prompted most of his actions. His voice changed a little as he answered, and he was more like his old self than he had been for days.

“Leonora,” he said, “I would not insult you for anything. But would you rather I were not a little jealous, since I really love you?” Perhaps he spoke foolishly—perhaps he hoped to soften her heart: at all events he spoke seriously enough, and laid his hand

on hers. But she did not like his touch and drew her fingers away.

“A little jealous!” she cried. “So little that I am kept like a prisoner and watched like a political suspect! Be jealous—yes—since you say you love me; but behave like a sensible creature. Moreover, you might make sure that you had some cause for jealousy before coupling the name of the first man you chance to dislike with mine. Is not that an insult?”

“Certainly it is—and if I did that you would be quite right,” said he; “but things are a little different. You do not understand Batiscombe—I do. You have taken a fancy for him—so did I. But you push your fancy too far. I now understand him, and I do not think him a proper friend for you. You make difficulties, you insist upon seeing him. I forbid you, and prevent you. You turn pale and ill, and I am angry that you should be so foolish. *Mon Dieu!* I am angry—*voilà.*”

“One must certainly allow,” said Leonora, with a sneer, “that you have a singularly

delicate way of stating your own case." It was the best thing she could find to say, though she knew the sarcasm was not merited, and that it was quite true. He wished once for all to put the matter clearly before her and he did it honestly and delicately, since he described her passion as a "fancy," her strategy and secret meetings as "insisting upon seeing" Mr. Batiscombe. It would be impossible to state such a case more delicately if it was to be stated at all. A cleverer man, or a less jealous man than Marcantonio, might have gone about it less directly; and that is all that can be said. But he was a half-formed character, as yet, with some good possibilities and hardly any bad ones. He was naturally good, but good as yet without much experience, and his teaching in the troubles of life had come upon him very suddenly. It had never struck him that it could be difficult to manage a woman, and he did not like the idea now that it was thrust upon him. The woman he had made his wife would, he had supposed, be like his sister, of the kind that manage

themselves, and do it well; and if he had anticipated exercising any influence over Leonora, it was influence of a very different sort from that which he was now driven to exert. He had made up his mind, however, that she must obey him now, or that he would perish in the struggle, and a certain family obstinacy of purpose, inherited from his father and all his race, suddenly made its appearance and changed him from an easy-going, pleasant-spoken young fellow, into a very determined man, as far as his wife was concerned.

He had said she should go at once, and go she should, without any delay whatsoever. Instead of answering her sarcastic remark about his indelicacy, he went obstinately back to his proposition.

"Let us not talk any more about it," he said, to cut the difficulty short. "You will doubtless be so amiable as to give the necessary orders about your things?"

Leonora shrugged her shoulders very slightly, as much as it is well bred for a great

lady to do, and as much as would horrify a very strict mamma.

“If you wish it,” she said, “I must.”

“Then we will start in two days, if it is agreeable to you.”

“It is not agreeable to me,” said Leonora, wearied to death by his civility, “but we will start when you please—in two days if you say it.”

She was casting about in her mind for some desperate means of seeing Julius and assuring herself that he would follow her. Of course he would do that, but she could not go without seeing him once more in Sorrento; there was so much to be said that she could not write—so very much!

The conversation with Marcantonio had taken place little more than an hour before dinner. As he left the room Leonora glanced at the clock. There was time yet—if she could only get some conveyance. She might see Julius and be back before dinner. She could make some excuse for not dressing—if her husband noticed it, which was unlikely.

He had gone to his room, contrary to his custom, for he generally did not leave her until she went to dress. His windows were towards the sea, and she could slip out through the garden. It had rained a little, but that was no matter. There would be the less dust.

A garden hat she sometimes wore hung in the hall, among her husband's hats and whips and sticks, she snatched it quickly and went out, walking leisurely for a few yards, till she was hidden by the orange-trees. Then she gathered up her skirt a little and ran like a deer over the moist path, through the gate that stood ajar, and down the narrow lane between the high damp walls towards Sorrento, never looking behind her nor pausing to take breath, for she feared that if she stopped to breathe she would stop to think, and would not do what she most wished to.

There are always little open carriages hanging about the lanes during the height of the season, in hopes of picking up stray fares, and before she had gone two hundred yards she overtook one of these, moving lazily along. The man

was all grins and alacrity at the mere sight of her and pulled up, gesticulating wildly and leaning backward over his box to arrange the cushions with one hand while he held the reins with the other. The whole conveyance is so small that the driver can touch every part of the inside with his hands from his seat. She sprang in and told the man the name of Batiscombe's hotel, promising him anything if he would drive fast. In six or seven minutes he put down at the door, and she told him to wait. She would have dismissed him at once and taken another to return, but she found herself without money. She could borrow something from Batiscombe.

He had chanced to tell her the number of his rooms one day, when she was asking about the hotel, and now she luckily remembered it. Stopping the first servant she met, she bade him show her the way. One of Batiscombe's sailors, resplendent in dark-blue flannel and a scarlet silk handkerchief, was seated on a bench outside the door. He was a quick fellow, and Julius employed him as his

body servant. Sailors, he said, were always cleaner than servants, and much neater.

The man sprang to his feet, saw the anxious expression in Leonora's face and the general appearance of haste about her, and guessing he could not do wrong, opened the door and almost pushed her in, closing it behind her and confronting the astonished hotel servant with a perfectly grave face.

Sailors have good memories, especially for people who own boats, and the man remembered Leonora perfectly well, having helped to row her to Castellamare, and having raced her crew on the occasion when Batiscombe attempted a precipitous flight. In his opinion the Marchesa Carantoni would not wish to be seen waiting outside his master's door, whatever might be the errand that brought her in such hot hurry. The hotel servant grumbled something about the franc he had expected for bringing the lady up, and the stalwart seaman laughed at him, so that he cursed the whole race of sea-folk, and went away in anger of the serio-comic, hotel kind.

Leonora found herself in Batiscombe's sitting room. For Batiscombe was a luxurious man, excepting when he was roughing it in earnest, and he had made up his mind of late years that a human being could not exist in less than two rooms, if he lived in rooms at all.

Leonora had not thought at all, from the moment when she had taken her resolution in her own drawing-room until she found herself standing before Julius Batiscombe in the hotel. At such times, women act first and think afterwards, lest perchance the thinking should interfere with the doing. But now that the thing was done, she realised at once the whole importance of the step, and at the same time, she understood with what ease it had been accomplished. She saw how, with one bound, she was out of her prison, and with the man she loved, and though she was frightened at the magnitude of the deed, she knew that with him she would find strength and comfort and happiness. What did it matter about the past?

She had not seen Julius for a fortnight, and

though in that time she knew that her love had increased tenfold, yet the outline of him had lost distinctness and she found him more than ever the man she had dreamed of, and discovered, and loved. He was one of those men whose magnificent vitality casts a sort of magnetic influence on their surroundings, just as Leonora herself sometimes did. When Batiscombe was away his faults might be detected and criticised—his selfishness, his combativeness, his vanities. But when he was talking to people, and chose to be agreeable, it was hard not to fall under the spell. He was so eminently a man of action as well as of thought, that even those who disliked him most were obliged to confess that he had certain large qualities—comforting themselves by describing them as “dangerous,” as perhaps they were, to himself and others.

And now Leonora looked upon him and knew how wholly and truly she loved him, and how ready she was to sacrifice anything and anybody to her love, even to herself and her own reputation and honour. With heroic

people that consideration of self might first be thrown to the winds; but Leonora was not heroic. She was very passionate and sometimes very foolish, but with all her "higher standard" she believed in the social regulations and distinctions of life. It was the English part of her nature, fighting for a show of Philistinism amidst so much that was the very reverse. It was a strong passion indeed that could make her throw it all away, or even think such a step possible.

It was not that she had yielded weakly to a first impression of weariness after her marriage, and had at once begun to amuse herself with the first man who crossed her path. Weariness alone, the mere commonplace sensation of being bored, could never have led her to such a length. A great variety of circumstances had combined to bring about her destruction. The wild and exalted ideas of her girlhood, gilding Marcantonio with just enough romance to make him barely come within the line of her "standard," but, nerved and encouraged by the faculty she possessed for deceiving herself, had

led her into a rash marriage ; in which she had been helped and applauded by all those sensible people who think that when money and position are combined on both sides, marriage must necessarily be a good thing. Then followed the bitter disappointment and collapse of all her theories and hopes, leaving a desperate void and a certainty of misery, which gathered strength even from the command of language she had acquired in the study of the imaginary nothingness of everything. All the terms she had learned, wherewith to express that the world was a wretched sham, she applied to her own case with a savage readiness, when she found herself disappointed. And then, at the very moment when there seemed nothing before her but a dreary waste of years, chained to a man whose whole life was made up of details and mild, though sincere affection, an individual had appeared who realised the dream she had lost—a man, full of strength and courage and intellect, and possessing to the full that weakness which to women seems the noblest quality of all, and

the strongest, the capacity for being madly and recklessly in love.

And it is indeed a noble quality so long as it is locked close within the treasury of the soul, and so long as one good woman, and one only, holds the key. But of all the unutterable baseness in this world, there is none more despicable than that of the man who can make one woman after another believe that he loves her to distraction, as he never loved any one else—even though he may each time believe it himself and swear to himself beneath the maudlin moon, with an ever fresh stock of contemptible sentimentality, that he has reached his last and greatest passion—the very last; well knowing, the while, that if the furies spare him to an unhonoured old age, it is out of sheer contempt for the blear-eyed Adonis, shambling weak-kneed to his grave with a rose in his button-hole and a ghastly leer at the last woman he meets before death overtakes him.

Leonora was a woman who was probably incapable of a second passion, and the wholeness of the first might lend it some dignity,

some simple loftiness of disregard for lesser things, making it seem nobler for being a single sin, sinned bravely for true love's sake. When there is any excuse for love it is an easy task to make it look far better than it is. There were such things in the world long before Launcelot loved Guinevere, or Héloïse was laid in the grave with Abelard ; and the world may see such things again. But the world has no lack of men like Julius Batiscombe, men in no way worthy of the women who love them, nor ever able to be worthy.

Leonora had chosen, and she would not have given him up for all the joys of paradise, any more than she would have believed a word against his faithfulness and loyalty to herself. He had sworn—how could he deceive her ?

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Leonora met her husband at dinner an hour later, her face was set like a mask, for her mind was made up and every moment hardened her stony determination.

Julius had said to her, "come " and she would go to the very end of the world if need be. He had stated the case with a show of fairness. She must fully understand the step, he said, and that there was no return possible from such an exile as they undertook together. She must abandon everything, and not only her husband, but her mother, her father, her position before the world, her whole gorgeous, luxurious, aristocratic existence. She must rely on his arm alone to support her, and on

his love to be her only comfort and compensation. They must live an isolated life, whether wandering, or resting in some quiet place where society never came. She must also take the chance of his being killed by Marcantonio, who would certainly make an effort to destroy him, and the chance was not small, considering the provocation. If it happened that he fell, she would certainly be left alone in the world. This was probably the strongest argument with her against flight, but it had not weight enough to hold her back, for she had the pride of a woman who had found a man ready to fight for her, in these latter days when fighting is so terribly out of fashion; and she felt in her heart that she would always be able to prevent an encounter, and so it did not matter so much, after all.

The resolution she had made had killed any doubt that might still have remained as to the ultimate result of her love for Julius. Henceforth it was her duty to kill doubts in order to be happy; and, to say truth, there were few left, for her love was very sincere and real.

But if any should arise she meant to smother them instantly. Perhaps she had had some similar intention when she married Marcantonio, for her nature was so enthusiastic and sanguine that when once she had decided on a course she would prove to herself it was right in defiance of anything—except, of course, something she liked better. And now she remembered every word her lover had spoken in that brief stolen interview, and she felt no fear. But her face was set, and she looked defiantly at her husband. A few hours more, she thought, and she would be free from him, from the world, from everything—for ever.

They would have gone at once, that very minute, but Batiscombe pointed out that the time was ill chosen. She had been seen to come to the hotel—the servant who had shown her up stairs had noticed her, perhaps recognised her; in half an hour after the dinner hour she would be missed at the villa, and they would surely be overtaken on land, especially as there was no train at that time. Julius said his boat was moored at the foot of the cliff below

the hotel, but it would be impossible to reach it without being observed by many people, some of whom might recognise her. There was also no wind, the sea was oily with a deadly calm, and the full moon, just rising, would make pursuit easy, for though his boat could beat anything on the coast under canvas, she was over heavy in the water for his six men to row at any speed.

But at midnight, when the easterly breeze was blowing from the land, he would be down at the landing of her villa, ready. Marcantonio was always asleep at that hour, for he rose betimes in the morning and went to bed early. The dogs? Julius had thought of that, and sending his sailor servant to the kitchen of the hotel, he obtained in a few minutes a couple of solid lumps of meat, which he caused to be wrapped in paper and then tied up in a silk handkerchief for her to carry. She might find it hard, he said, to get anything of the kind in her own house. She was fond of animals, and was sure she could manage to quiet the terriers in a moment if she had something to give them.

Besides, they knew her, and would only bark a very little at first. The moon was full, to be sure, but that could not be helped. Once on the water, nothing short of steam could catch them, and that was not available at such short notice. She should not hamper her flight with unnecessary things, he said, for if any one were roused she would have to run for her life as far as the beginning of the descent where he would be in waiting for her. These and a hundred other little directions he had given her, with the quiet forethought for details that was part of his remarkable intellect. He had told her in five minutes what to wear, what she might take, what she should eat in order to bear the fatigue—in a word, nothing had escaped him.

And now she sat opposite her husband at their small dinner table, looking hard and determined, but listening with more than usual complacency to his talk, and striving to eat something, as Julius had instructed her. She made such a good pretence that Marcantonio noticed it approvingly.

“I am glad to see, *mon ange*,” he said, “that

you are finding again your appetite. It is most encouraging."

It was just like his want of tact, thought Leonora. It was just like him to suppose that she would eat the more because he wanted her to do so, and watched her! *Dieu!* what a nuisance, to be always watched. It would soon be over now, however, and she could afford to be indifferent.

"*En effet,*" said she, "I am hungry—I do not know why."

"Does any one know why they are hungry?" said Marcantonio, with a little laugh. "It happens to me to take much exercise. I rise with the sun, I walk, I ride, I despatch my correspondence, I work like a dog—*et puis*, at breakfast I eat nothing. No appetite. Good. Another day, I lie in bed till ten o'clock, rise with a cigarette, read a novel, and—*voyez donc*, how droll—I eat, perhaps, for four people. But I have often observed that, if I eat a mayonnaise at dinner, I have no appetite the next day at breakfast. It is *pourtant* extremely singular, for the cook makes the mayonnaise of great delicacy."

What could it possibly matter whether Marcantonio were hungry or not, or what he ate for dinner? But Leonora was glad to have him say anything, so that she might be spared the effort of talking.

"It is true," she said, absently, "his mayonnaise is not bad." She hoped he would go on—it was an easy, neutral subject—of many ingredients, concerning each of which it would be possible to differ and to raise a fresh discussion.

"*À propos*," said Marcantonio, "the gardener's boy cut his finger very badly this afternoon—"

"*À propos* of mayonnaise?" Leonora could not help asking the question. His conversation was so absurd.

"*Ma foi!* mayonnaise—vegetables—gardens—gardeners and the gardener's boy—all that holds together. As I was saying, he cut his finger, and I sent your maid to get something to bind it with."

"I hope she did not take one of my lace handkerchiefs," remarked Leonora. "It would be just like her."

“It was not lace, I am sure,” said Marcantonio, with an air of conviction, as he helped himself to the salad which Temistocle handed him. “But it looked very new. I hope she made no mistake.”

The comic side of the situation suddenly forced itself on Leonora, as it often will happen with people on the eve of great danger. A lacquey in Paris once danced a jig on the scaffold before he was broken on the wheel. Leonora laughed aloud.

“Would it amuse you, for instance,” inquired Marcantonio with a puzzled look, “to have a good handkerchief destroyed to tie up the boy’s finger?”

It seemed so funny to Leonora to think that on the morrow her entire stock of handkerchiefs would be at the disposal of all the gardeners in Sorrento if they chanced to cut their fingers.

“No—not that,” she said. “It is so odd that you should take so much trouble about it—or care.”

“Poor people,” said Marcantonio, “one must do what one can for them.”

And so their last conversation tottered to its end in a round of domestic triviality, so that Leonora wondered how she could have borne it so long. But, in truth, Marcantonio was so much afraid of rousing her opposition that evening, after the scene that had taken place, that he purposely avoided every intelligent subject, and did violence to his own preference for the sake of keeping the peace. He liked to talk politics, he liked to talk of Rome, of society, of a hundred things, but of late he had found it very hard to talk peaceably about anything.

After dinner Marcantonio smoked, and Leonora sat beside him, with a little worsted work that she did with a huge ivory needle. Her heart beat fast as the hour approached when she must part from her husband. She glanced at him from time to time, sitting there so unsuspecting of any surprise, with his cigarette and his *Fanfulla*, the witty Roman paper that amused him so much. His delicate, dark features, a little weak perhaps, looked handsome enough in the lamplight, and Leonora

thought for a moment that she had never seen him look so well. She was already so far from him in her thoughts that she regarded him as from a distance, with a certain abstracted consideration of his merits that was new to her.

Poor Marcantonio! A certain curiosity, that would have been pity if she had allowed it, came over her. She wondered how he would look when she was gone. Ten o'clock—two hours to midnight, and he never saw her before nine in the morning now. Nine and two were eleven. In eleven hours he would know—unless something happened. Would he rage and storm, like a wild beast? Or would he break down and shed tears? Neither, she thought. He did not love her—he was only jealous. Heavens! thought she, if Julius had been in his position, and he in Julius's, could things have ever got to this pass without some fearful outbreak? Ah no! Julius was so hot-tempered and strong. Her thoughts went away with her, and she heaved a quick short breath—suddenly interrupted

in the recollection of where she was. Marcantonio looked round.

“What is it, *ma chère* ?” he asked.

“Nothing—I was going to sneeze,” said Leonora with a ready excuse.

“There is too much air,” said he, rising and going toward the window. He looked out for a moment. The first breath of the easterly wind was coming over the mountains and just stirring a ripple on the moonlit bay. It had rained early in the afternoon, and they had sat indoors on account of the dampness. Marcantonio sniffed the breeze, said it was damp, and closed the window.

“It must be late,” said he. “*En vérité*, it is twenty minutes to eleven! I would not have thought it.”

Leonora’s heart beat fast.

“I suppose it is time to go to bed,” she said, with enough indifference to escape notice. Marcantonio had not enjoyed the evening much, and was sleepy. Leonora moved slowly about the room, touching a book here and a photograph there as though to make the room

comfortable for the night. Some women always do it. Her blood was throbbing wildly—the last strong effort of conscience was upon her. A great pity sprang up in her—a terrible regret—a horror of great evil. Her resolutions, her love, her determination to fly, her better self, all struggled and reeled furiously together. She felt an irresistible impulse to throw herself at her husband's feet, to confess everything, to implore his protection, and forgiveness, and help. She turned towards him suddenly. He was in the act of ringing the bell.

The sharp tinkle of the thing, sounding from far away through the open doors of the house, checked her when she was on the very point of speaking. Almost instantly, the quick tread of the servant was heard. He came, and the supreme moment was over. The reality of her situation returned, and with it the hardness it needed. The man had the candles ready in his hands, and stood waiting to accompany Leonora to her door.

“Good night, Marcantoine,” said she, holding out her hand. It was cold and clammy with intense excitement, and her face was pale to the lips.

“*Bonne nuit, mon ange chérie,*” said he, touching his lips to her fingers, and she passed from him. Just beyond the door she turned and looked back, with a touch of sadness.

“Good night,” she said once more, faintly—for the last, the very last time.

When Marcantonio was alone, he took his newspapers and one or two letters that had come by the late post, he looked carefully round the room, to see that he had forgotten nothing, as he had a bad habit of doing, and he marched gloomily off to his room, which was beyond Leonora’s and separated from hers by her sitting-room. Her dressing-room was on the other side of her bedroom, and had a separate door, opening upon the head of the stairs.

As soon as Leonora had dismissed her maid for the night, she began to make her preparations. She had a large silk bag, of

many colours, made like an old-fashioned purse, with heavy silver rings. She used it for carrying her work, her books, or anything she needed when she went into the garden to spend the morning. It seemed the best thing to take with her now, for it would hold a good deal and was convenient. She filled it with handkerchiefs, bottles of eau-de-cologne and hair-pins, and she put in a tiny looking-glass in a silver case, that she had used all her life. It was of no use to think of taking anything else, she thought, since she must carry it all in her hand. Then she went over her jewels and took her own, carefully setting aside all that her husband had given her. She tied them up in a handkerchief with two hard knots—the best she knew how to make—and she put them into the bag with the rest of the things. Then she found her purse, and put into it all the money she had, for it was her own, and she thought she might as well have it—and there was her cheque-book in the drawer of the writing-table. Of course she could draw her own money just as well

when——she did not finish the sentence to herself.

Presently she went into the sitting room, and listened at the small side door that opened into Marcantonio's bedroom. She had taken an hour over her preparations; it was half-past eleven, and he was asleep—she heard his regular breathing distinctly. The full moon shone outside upon the gravel walks and the orange-trees, and the soft wind was blowing steadily through the open windows. She paused one moment before she went back, and she looked out at the scene, so sweet and peaceful in the ivory moonlight. Far off in the town the clocks struck the half hour. Julius must be already on the water—perhaps near the landing. She hastened to her room, treading on tiptoe; her maid had left her in her loose white peignoir—she must dress again, and dress quickly, or she would be late.

It did not take long—though she put the candle before her glass and dallied a little with a ribbon and a pin. The dress was soft and dark, fitting close to her figure. In

reality she had selected it because it had a pocket—that would be such a convenient thing on a journey. A hat—yes, she must have a hat, for of course they would land somewhere, though a veil would be more convenient in the wind.

There was a great vase of carnations, gathered that day, that stood on a little table by the window. At the last minute, Leonora stopped and took one. She went back to the glass with the candle in her hand and pinned the flower in her dress, eying the effect critically. They were the flowers he loved best—it was an afterthought, and would please him. She was ready, the bag hung over her arm, the package of meat for the dogs in one hand, and a candle in the other. She blew out the remaining lights as the clocks struck midnight, put the one she carried upon a chair by the door, while she softly turned the latch, looked out cautiously, and left the room.

Once out of the passage and on the stairs, she had no fear of being heard, and she descended rapidly. One moment more and she

was in the open air. The front door closed behind her. Something touched her feet, and, looking down, she saw that the white kitten had followed her out ; she had not noticed it, poor thing, and she could not risk opening the door again to put it back.

She glanced out into the moonlight from beneath the porch, and she was frightened. It was only a step—a minute's run, if she ran fast, to the beginning of the passage—but she hesitated and hung back. Oh, if the last step were not so hard ! If Julius had only met her at the door instead of being down there—but he was even now at the head of the steps. She realised his presence, and the garden was no longer a solitude—she was not alone any more. The kitten mewed discontentedly. She bethought herself of the dogs, picked up the little beast, and moved quickly down the walk, running faster as she neared the end.

Her running on the path roused the terriers, which were prowling about among the shrubbery in the warm night, and they sprang upon her not ten yards from the mouth of the descent,

barking furiously and snapping at her dress. She dropped the parcel of meat instantly, but they did not see it at once and pursued her. In one moment more she was lifted from the ground and held firmly in the mighty grasp of the strong man who stood ready, and had run forward to meet her when the dogs sprang out. But, in the quick act, the kitten fell to the ground almost between the enraged terriers.

It was over in a minute. One frantic, piteous death-scream and the poor little white cat lay dead on the gravel path, and the terriers sniffed her little body disdainfully as though congratulating each other on their brave deed.

"Oh, Julius, they have killed my kitten!" cried Leonora in real distress. They were already under the archway, and Batiscombe was urging her to descend, but she clung to him, and stared back into the moonlight at the dogs and her dead pet.

Julius himself was enraged at the thing—it was so wantonly cruel.

"Run on," said he, in a whisper; "I will settle them." He had reflected quickly that

they had only barked for a moment, and that any one who heard them would have heard the cat also and would have taken no notice of the noise.

At that very moment Marcantonio turned on his pillow, and, half waking, swore to himself, as he had done every night of his life for weeks, that he would send the dogs away in the morning. But all was still, and he fell asleep again instantly.

Julius went back upon the path, and the terriers growled, still scenting their vanquished prey. But he moved quickly and softly, speaking gently to them in a low voice, and holding out his hand to them. He had a sort of influence over animals, and they let him come close, pricking their ears and sniffing about his legs. Suddenly, as they smelled at his boots, he caught them by their necks in an iron grip, one in each hand, and held them up at arm's length, struggling frantically, but utterly incapable of making a sound.

"You killed her cat, did you, you brutes?" he muttered, savagely. "I will kill you."

He broke their necks, one after the other, and threw their quivering bodies far out under the orange-trees.

Leonora had watched him from the archway. She shuddered.

“They will not bark any more,” said Julius, as he came to her.

“What strong hands you have,” she said.

A window opened up in the house, a hundred yards away. Batiscombe’s quick ear caught the sound.

“Come, sweetheart,” he whispered ; “some one is stirring.” His arm was round her as he guided her down the first steps, tenderly and strongly. She stumbled a little.

“Oh, Julius, I am so frightened !” she said piteously.

He stopped and took her off the ground as though she had been a child, and bore her swiftly and surely through the dark way. She could see his fiery blue eyes in the gloom, and in the flashes of white light as they passed the windows and arches where the moon streamed in, and as she looked she could feel her own

grow big and dark; and she was frightened and very happy. But she thought of that strange thing she had dreamt—this very flight of hers exactly as it was to happen, so that she hid her face against his coat and clung to him nervously.

“Put me down,” she cried earnestly, as they emerged upon the flat rock of the landing, “put me down, Julius—I dreamed you fell here.”

He obeyed her, and set her on her feet, still supporting her with his arm about her waist. One passionate kiss—only one—and then they came out from the shadow of the high cliff, and saw the boat riding lightly in the moonlight, two sailors holding her off the rocks, and the rest busy on board with the sails. The water plashed musically in the little hollows, and from near by there came a deep, mysterious murmur out of the many dark caves that lined the shore.

Leonora stepped lightly in, and Julius arranged the cushions about her carefully. Neither of them spoke. With a few strong strokes of the oars the boat shot out into the breeze from the

lee of the gorge. The jib was already set, and foresail and mainsail went up in a moment, wing and wing, the tapering, lateen-yards pointing to right and left like the horns of a great, soft, white moth; the water rippled at the stern and curled up and lapped the rudder as the sails filled, and ever swiftly and more swiftly the craft rushed down the bay in the glorious moonlight, before the steady east wind.

Julius held the tiller with one hand, and the other lovingly supported Leonora's head against his breast, as she lay along the cushions in the stern.

"Darling," he said presently, "what was the dream about my falling at the landing? You never told me."

She did not answer, but lay quite still.

"Dear one," he murmured, bending down, "are you so tired? Leonora—sweetheart—speak to me!"

But the strain had been too strong, and Leonora lay in his arms, whiter than death under the white moon, unconscious of Julius or of the sea. Julius saw that she had fainted.

CHAPTER V.

AT half-past eight the next morning Temistocle found Leonora's maid at the door of her mistress's room with an expression of blank astonishment on her face that made him laugh. He often laughed, quietly, without the least noise.

"You look exactly like a lay figure in a milliner's shop," he remarked. "Except, indeed, that you look much more stupid."

The maid glared at him.

"The signora——" she began, and then trembled and looked round timidly.

"What about her?" inquired Temistocle, pricking up his ears.

The maid let her voice drop to a low whisper.

"She is not there," said she.

"*Ebbene*," said Temistocle with a grin, "what has happened to you? She is probably gone out—gone to church. A good place for heretics too."

"*Macchè*," whispered the woman, "she has not slept in her bed, and everything is upside down in the room."

"May the devil carry you off," said Temistocle, suddenly changing his voice, and whispering hoarsely. "Let me see—let me pass." He put down the can of hot water he was taking to his master, and pushed past the maid, into Leonora's bedroom.

"*Bada*," said the woman, going after him cautiously, "take care! The signore might come in and find you."

"What harm is there?" asked the servant. And then he made a careful survey of the premises, locking all the doors except the one by which they had entered.

"It is true what you said," he remarked pushing the maid out of the room. "An apoplexy on these foreigners who go away

without telling one. *Fuori!* Go along with you, my child. *Ci penso io*—I will look after all this.” And he locked the door behind him, put the key in his pocket, and took up his water-can.

“What are you doing?” asked the maid. Temistocle had seen a chance, and took it.

“Look here,” said he, rubbing the thumb and forefinger of his hand together before the girl’s eyes—which means “money” in gesture language, “look here. The signore accompanied the signora to the early train from Castellamare this morning at half-past four. They had a hired carriage. She went away and forgot her jewels on the table. She is gone to Rome on business—they were talking about it last night. Do you understand?”

“No,” answered the woman, looking puzzled, “you said she had gone out—”

“I said so to you,” he answered with a sly grin, “but I will not say so to any one else, nor you either. Remember that she went to Rome this morning. It will be worth your while to remember that.”

The woman smiled a cunning smile. She had hated her mistress, and would have liked to make a scandal before all the other servants, but Temistocle's advice would be more profitable. So they arranged the matter between them and parted.

Marcantonio was seated at his writing-table when Temistocle entered. He always got up very early, and did a great many things before he dressed. Temistocle busied himself a moment about the room, and when he was ready to go he came to the table and laid the key he had taken from Leonora's door at his master's elbow.

"What is that?" asked Marcantonio looking up.

"It is the key of the signora Marchesa's bedroom, *eccellenza*," answered Temistocle edging away toward the door. "Her excellency must have gone away very early, and she left her room open and all her jewelry strewed about. So I locked the doors and brought you the key."

He was very near the door and could escape in a moment.

But Marcantonio did not move. His jaw

dropped, and his colour changed to a yellow waxen hue, that terrified the servant. But he did not move. Temistocle continued—

“I told the servants not to be astonished, as you had accompanied the signora Marchesa to the early train for Rome before daybreak,” he said, putting his hand on the latch.

Marcantonio made as though he would rise. Temistocle slipped nimbly through the door and closed it behind him, running away as though the police were after him. But he knew that, when Carantoni had recovered, he would be amply rewarded for his wisdom. It often chances that villains play a good and sensible part in life, for it is often quite as profitable as villainy, and is always safer.

Marcantonio struggled to rise, and at last got upon his feet, staggering like a man stunned by a physical blow. The door to Leonora's sitting-room was open, but, beyond, the one to her bedroom was locked. He had to go round by the passage, feeling his way as though he were blind. At last he found the lock—the key turned, and he entered.

It was just as she had left it. The white peignoir she had taken off when she dressed for her flight lay in a heap upon the floor where she had thrown it in her haste. The half-burned candles stood dismally on the dressing table. The drawer from which she had taken the handkerchiefs was half open. The windows were thrown back, and the blinds had not been closed, so that the strong glare of the morning poured rudely in on the confusion, and the flies buzzed about the scented soap and the bottles of lavender and the pot of carnations in the corner.

Marcantonio dragged himself from one part of the room to another till he stumbled against the table on which Leonora had left her scattered jewelry—all the things he had given her. He stood staring down at the glittering gold and precious stones, unconsciously realising that they were all his presents that she had left behind her. There was a strange old Maltese cross of diamonds and sapphires among them, mounted in silver. It had belonged to his mother, and he had given it to Leonora with other things

when he married her. His eyes fastened upon it, and his hand crept across the table and took it.

He raised it to his white lips and kissed it once—twice; he would have kissed it again, but the bow of his strength was bent too far and snapped asunder. With a short fierce cry he threw up his hands, and fell prostrate on the smooth tiled floor, as a dead man might have fallen.

He lay entirely unconscious for hours, so that when he at last came to himself and struggled to move till he could sit up and stare about him, the midday sun was pouring in, and the flies angrily tormented his ghastly face, as though in derision of anything so miserable. For some minutes he sat upon the floor, dazed and stupid with the oppression of returning grief, as well as stunned from the physical pain resulting from his fall. He was not hurt seriously, but he was bruised and weak. At last he got to his feet, steadying himself by the table. He would not see what was about him any more, for he knew it all,

and the full consciousness of his misfortune was on him. He regained his own room, carefully locking Leonora's door behind him, and taking with him his mother's diamond cross.

But the mere sense of grief could not long hold the mastery with a man like Marcantonio. He had loved his wife too well not to resent the injury and scorn, as well as weep over it. As he pondered, lying in his bed, there arose in his breast a desperate and concentrated anger against the man who had deprived him of what he best loved in the world, the anger of a mind that has never reasoned much about anything, and will carry unreason to any length when it comes. He must find his enemy; that was the principal thought in his mind. That he would kill him when he found him was a proposition that seemed a matter of course.

But, in order to find him, it was necessary to move, to search, and turn everything over. He turned on his pillow, feeling the first restless stirrings of the demon that would by and by give him no peace by day or night till the man was found and the blow struck.

He turned over and rang a bell by his bedside.

“Give me some coffee, and order the carriage,” he said to the servant.

The first thing when, at the end of an hour, he found himself in the town was to inquire for Batiscombe. It seemed as though fate favoured Carantoni at the outset, for he found his name at once on the register of the hotel and found also the man who had waited on Julius. This servant had been told that a lady had come in great haste soon after seven on the previous evening and had stayed more than half an hour. As soon as she was gone, Mr. Batiscombe had sent for his bill and had ordered his boat to be ready at eleven—the servant had heard the order. The man guessed there was something wrong from Marcantonio’s face, but Batiscombe’s sudden departure had excited no remark. He had arrived late at night in his boat, as many people had done, and as the moon was full it was natural enough that he should sail away as he had come. People arrive continually

at Sorrento in yachts, and no one takes any notice of them.

His luggage? Yes, he had taken most of his things with him, except one large box, which he had ordered to be sent to Turin. It had gone to Castellamare at once. Mr. Batiscombe had been in the hotel before. He was a very good signore.

At this hint Marcantonio gave the man a heavy fee. Did he happen to know the address on the box? There was no address, except his name. The box was to be left in *deposito* at Turin until called for. It was to go by express train, and Mr. Batiscombe had left money to pay for its carriage in advance. Mr. Batiscombe paid his bills by cheques on a banker in Rome. Marcantonio might have the name if he pleased. Before leaving he had paid his bill and given a cheque for five or six hundred francs more. The proprietor knew him very well, and was always glad to oblige him, so he had procured a little cash. Before going he had sent for a silk-merchant—there are hundreds in Sorrento—and had bought a

quantity of things of him. He had left the hotel at eleven by the steps to the sea, and the servant had seen him into his boat—for which parting civility, Batiscombe had given him ten francs. The man had watched the boat for a few minutes. They did not hoist sail, but rowed away towards Castellamare.

That was all, absolutely all, that the man could tell Marcantonio; but it was sufficient for the present. It was clear that Julius had taken Leonora from the landing of the villa. She must have slipped out soon after midnight. The barking of the dogs suddenly came back to Marcantonio's memory, and the scream of the poor cat. He sprang into his carriage and drove furiously homeward.

"Where are the dogs?" he asked, as soon as he alighted.

The groom did not like to answer. He thought Marcantonio would be angry and visit their death on him. But as his master insisted, he went away without saying a word and brought a large basket. In it lay the two dead terriers and the dead kitten, all three side by side.

"The dogs killed the cat," said the man apologetically. "There are the marks of their teeth, *eccellenza*."

"But the dogs? How were they killed?" asked Marcantonio savagely.

"*Eccellenza*, their necks are broken. I cannot understand how it could have been done. We found them all dead near the *calata*, the descent, the cat on the path, and the dogs under the trees a few paces away."

Carantoni took up one of the terriers in his hands, and looked at it.

"So you killed my dogs, did you, you brute?" he muttered. "I will kill you." He unconsciously used Batiscombe's own words. His face was yellow, and his eyes bloodshot. He dropped the dead beast into the basket.

"Bury them," he said aloud, and turned on his heel, going into the house.

He had accomplished a great deal in a few hours. He had ascertained that they had fled by sea; that Julius had a bank account in Rome with a banker whose address he had got; that Julius had sent his box to Turin,

where he would most likely be ultimately heard of. More than that he could not know for the present. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. He could still catch the train to Rome. He could do nothing more in Sorrento, and he could no more remain inactive for one moment than he could give up the whole pursuit. While his things were being hastily packed he thought of Diana. It was the first time, since the morning, that he had realised that he was not absolutely alone in the world. He sat down and wrote a telegram, intending to send it from the station. It was brief and to the point.

"She has left me. Can you meet me anywhere? Answer to Rome."

There are doubtless people in the world who take a morbid and unwholesome delight in the contemplation of sorrow. They can amuse themselves for many hours in studying the effect of grief upon their friends—and they can even find a curious diversion in their own troubles, so long as they can keep them far enough away to secure their bodily comfort.

There is a selfishness which is merely indifference to others, and there is a selfishness which feeds on its own soul, as the traditional bear licks his paws for nourishment. Soul for breakfast, soul for dinner, and soul for supper—above all, soul for five o'clock tea. It is very indigestible. The moral body languishes on the diet, and becomes thin, and emaciated, and surly, as a superannuated wolf in winter. Such people can sit for hours—I have seen them—poring over an imaginary grief, which could be got out of the way in a moment by a single blow. But it fascinates them, and they cannot take their eyes off it. They would not lose their troubles—they would not spill a single drop of the bitterness they have cunningly concocted for themselves—for all the world. They are people who have got hold of the wrong end of life and like it. They have heard a great deal about another set of people who “enjoy greatly and suffer greatly”—that is the stock phrase—and they would be delighted to be like them, but their limp vitality is capable of nothing of the sort. They have neither the

strength to sin, the honesty to be good, nor the common sense to be happy. And so they feebly paddle in their shallow puddles of woe, neither dry nor wet, and very muddy, when they might just as well sit on the clean hard ground and enjoy the cleanliness and solidity of it, if they can enjoy nothing else. But they will not. They will lie in the mud, and kick and scream and swear that they are shipwrecked, when they are a hundred miles from the sea and would take to their heels on the first sight of it.

One of the favourite hobbies of these individuals is a mysterious thing they call a "sweet sadness." Their ideas about sorrow are not even artistic. They might at least understand that even the intensest grief, apart from its causes, has no grandeur. A sad face is not of itself a beautiful object, though in the minds of persons of much experience and heart it may raise certain sympathies which belong to the highest part of man's nature, so that there is a distant reflection of a sentiment which is in itself good, though painful. The contemplation

of sorrow is not elevating unless it breeds a strong desire to alleviate it ; nor is the study of vice and crime in the least edifying unless it exhibits the nobility and power of purity in a highly practical light. No vicious criminal was ever reformed by realistic pictures of wickedness, any more than he can be improved by daily association with other vicious criminals. And a very little realism will throw a great ideal into the shade, as far as most people are concerned.

Marcantonio may therefore be allowed to go to Rome without being watched on the journey. His bitter suffering had settled about him and taken a shape and a complexion of its own, thinking its own thoughts and acting its own acts, without reference to the real Marcantonio, the easy, cheerful, happy man of a few short weeks ago. It was no change of character now, but rather the entire disappearance of the character beneath the flood of strong passions that had come from without, sweeping away the landmarks and beacons of all moral responsibility. One idea had taken possession of him,

and destroyed his consciousness of good and evil and his comprehension of the common things of life; his body and intelligence had become the mere tools of this idea, and would strain their strength to carry it out until one or the other gave way. Man is said to be a free agent, and as long as he remembers the fact, he is; but when he forgets it, the freedom is gone.

That morning, when the blow first struck him, he had still some vague thought that there was a course to follow which should be right as well as brave and honourable; it was the fast vanishing outline of his former self, used always to the ways of honour; it was vague and uncertain, and he had no time nor inclination to think about it, but it was present. The day wore on, bringing a fuller realisation of his desperate case, and the possibility of good in so much evil disappeared. When he was at last in the express train on his way to Rome he was only conscious of one thing—the determination to find Julius Batiscombe, and to kill him ruthlessly, be the consequences what they might.

Rome looked much as usual when he at last came out of the great ugly station upon the Piazza dei Termini. It was morning, and not yet eight o'clock, but the pitiless August sun drove its fire through everything—through flesh and bone and marrow of living things, through the glaring stones and dusty trees, and even the great jet of water looked like bright melting metal that would burn if it touched one.

But Marcantonio Carantoni was past feeling heat or cold or bodily hurt. He did not even remember that he had a servant with him, and he mechanically hailed a cab and was driven to his own house. They put a telegram into his hand; it was from Diana, in answer to his of the day before. It was briefer than his and breathed authority.

“Have left Pegli. Wait for me in Rome.”

That was all. He read it stupidly over two or three times. He would not have telegraphed to her if he had waited till to-day. Some instinct told him she would prevent and hinder his vengeance. Yesterday he wanted

help—to-day he wanted nothing but freedom from restraint and an opportunity of meeting Julius Batiscombe. She would not aid him in that, he was sure.

But she could not arrive to-day—it was a long journey from Pegli to Rome, he did not know exactly how long it took—his memory would not serve him with any details. He would have time in Rome to do the things he meant to do, and he would go to Turin that very night and watch that box of Batiscombe's. He would send for it, of course, wherever he was, and the box would betray him at last, if all other means failed. But meanwhile there were the police—there were detectives to be had, and plenty of them—money would do much, and his high position would do more. He would set a whole pack of sharp-scented human hounds at Batiscombe's heels—they would find him, and bring word, never fear. He laughed a low, concentrated laugh at the idea of employing the law to hunt his prey, in order that he might bid the law defiance and destroy his man alone.

He threw down the telegram and went to his room, followed closely by his servant, who had arrived in mad haste in a second cab, and believed his master was going to be insane unless he had a stroke of apoplexy, which seemed not unlikely. The man was a skilled valet, and Marcantonio suffered himself to be dressed and combed and smoothed, in perfect silence ; and when it was over he ate something that they brought him, without the slightest idea of what he was doing. He knew it was yet early, and that his business could not be done until the officials he needed were in their offices.

No sooner had the clock struck ten, however, than he took his hat and left the house. He found a cab, and had himself driven from one office to another all through the heat of the day—seeing confidential detectives and stating his business with a strange lucidity, never telling any single agent that he was employing another, but giving to each one a sum of money to begin his search and to each the same precise statement of all that

he knew. The consequence was that before the sun was low he had despatched half a dozen of the best men that could be found, and had got rid of about fifty thousand francs. Each one separately might have to go to the end of the world—to America perhaps, but most probably to England—before he could give the required information. It was necessary that his men should be perfectly free to move in any direction. He himself would go to Turin, and there receive their telegrams, himself watching that box of Batiscombe's, which he was sure must some day be claimed by its owner.

He was perfectly calm and self-possessed throughout all these arrangements. Only the strange ghastly colour that had overspread his face seemed to settle and become permanent, and his eyes were bloodshot and yellow, while his hand trembled violently when he held a pen or lit a match for his cigarette. But he felt no bodily ill, nor any capacity for fatigue. He had not closed his eyes for thirty-six hours, and had eaten little enough, but

there was not an ache or a sensation of pain in him, and he dreaded to pause or sit down, hating the idea of rest.

When he had done all that he could think of as being at all useful in his plan, he went home and told his servant to prepare for the journey to Turin that night. The train left at half-past ten—there were some hours yet to wait. He moved restlessly about the house, and ordered all the windows to be opened.

The great rooms were in their summer dress. The furniture, the huge pier glasses, and the chandeliers were all clothed in brown linen. The carpets had all been taken up, and the floors—some of marble, some of red brick, and some of tiles—were bare and smooth. There was the coolness and absence of all colour that seem to belong to great palaces when the owners are out of town, and the cold monotony of everything soothed him a little. After wandering aimlessly for half an hour, he settled into a regular walk, up and down the great ballroom, with its clear-story windows and vaulted ceiling. Up and

down, up and down, with an even, untiring tread he paced, his eyes bent always on the floor and his hands behind him. His walk was like clockwork, absolutely even and unchanging with its rhythmic echo and unvarying accuracy.

The broad daylight softened into shadow, and the shadow deepened into gloom, but still he kept on his beat as though counting his steps and measuring the time. There was a certain relief in it; not from his mastering thought, that held him in a vice and never relaxed for a second, but from his terrible restlessness. It was an outlet to his over-wrought activity, and he did it monotonously, without any consideration, because there was nothing else to do, and it would have driven him mad to sit still for five minutes.

As the night came on, strange faces seemed to look upon him from the gathering darkness. The thick, warm air took shape and substance, and he could distinguish forms moving quickly before him that he could not overtake. But there was no sensation of horror or fear with

the sight—he gazed curiously at the fleeting shadows and looked into their faces as they came close to him and retreated, but he could not recognise them, and did not ask himself whence they came nor whither they were going, nor why he saw them. It seemed very natural, somehow.

But at 'last, as he turned there was one coming toward him that had more substance than the rest, so that they all vanished but that one. It was a woman, and she seemed moving towards him—but it was almost quite dark. He came nearer—his waking senses caught the sound of her footstep—she was no shadow—it was his wife coming back to him—it had all been a fearful dream, and she was there again. He sprang forward with a quick cry.

“Leonora! Oh, thank God!” and he fell forward into her arms.

“No, dearest brother—it is not Leonora—would to God it were!”

Diana had come already—he could not tell how—and they stood together in the dark, empty ballroom, clasped in each other's arms.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE are some people who seem put into the world by Providence to stand in the breach, to lead the forlornest of hopes, to take up the troubles of the world and bear them bravely, neither groaning under the weight nor making a reckless jest of the burden. They are the heroes and the heroines who stand alone in the danger that others fear, and boldly do the good that comes in their way, and leave the evil behind. They are not always those of whom every one speaks well, for most people are very far from being loyal to those who have saved them ; they like to think, and to demonstrate to others, that they could have saved themselves quite as well, if not better, and they hate to measure the gulf that divides them

from the greatness of their masters. Better to assume at once that they are on the right side of the gulf and the heroes on the wrong, so that it may make no difference to their vanity.

Diana de Charleroi was of the stuff that makes heroes, saints, or martyrs, as the times will allow. She had made mistakes in her life, but they had been mistakes of judgment, of too much enthusiasm for what she admired in the days before she knew what to admire; they had never been errors of fear or weakness. It could hardly be said that her marriage was a mistake, for if she had not loved Charleroi as she had loved Batiscombe, she yet honoured him, and was all that a Christian wife can be to her husband, which is saying in a few words what is best and noblest to be said of any woman.

When she received her brother's message, vaguely asking if she could meet him anywhere, and conveying the terrible news of Leonora's flight, she did not hesitate a moment, but went straight to her husband. She told

him briefly the fact, trusting to him to say nothing until all chance of hiding the scandal should be passed; and she said she must go to her brother at once. Charleroi was an honest gentleman, besides being extremely clever, and he was very fond of her. He saw the position at once; he understood that a man like Marcantonio would very likely go out of his mind under such a trial, and that Diana alone could save him. He bestirred himself, and in an hour he was seated by her side in a carriage which would catch the express at Genoa. He was a man for quick emergencies, of complete *savoir faire* and entire self-possession, and if his intellect had been more profound and less brilliant he might have turned out a great general instead of a tolerably good diplomatist. He insisted on accompanying Diana to Genoa, where they caught the train, as he had expected, and he would have gone with her to Rome if she would have allowed him. But she sent him back to take care of the children, who could not be left alone, even under the charge of a whole battalion of nurses and

governesses, and he stood bareheaded on the platform of the gloomy station at Genoa as she moved away in her through-carriage out into the early morning light. She kissed her hand to him affectionately, and was heartily grateful for his quickness and skill as well as for his devotion. His last words were a friendly message to Marcantonio to the effect that, in case of a "meeting," he might rely on him to come at a moment's notice from any part of Europe.

She arrived in Rome at dark, got into a cab with her maid and luggage, and reached the Carantoni palace while Marcantonio was still pacing the ballroom, just in time to prevent his leaving for Turin. She had found ample time to think over the situation during the journey, and she was prepared for difficulties. Her brother would hardly be in his right mind, she thought, and would certainly be on the verge of doing something desperate, which she must prevent.

As was usual with her in sudden emergencies, she had been wonderfully quiet. She was

shocked and horrified at the news, but neither the shock nor the horror were uppermost in her mind. What she most felt was an unutterable and loving pity for her brother; and as she sat in the express train and looked out of the window at the interminable miles of vineyard and cornland, the kind, womanly tears gathered and fell softly. She could not help it, and she would not. Poor fellow! he deserved all her heart, and her soul's sympathy, and the tears thereof.

Marcantonio was in no state to reason or to be reasoned with. He had had a strange illusion for a moment, when he thought his wife had returned to him, but he at once realised his folly and understood that Diana had come to meet him—had come, doubtless, to prevent him from accomplishing his vengeance. He had been so sure that she would not arrive until the next morning that he had anticipated no interruption in his plans, and he was angry with her for being in his way. She would watch him day and night and hinder all his movements. So long as she was with

him it would be impossible to do anything. He answered her very coldly.

“You have come already? I did not expect you so soon.” They moved towards the door, groping in the deep gloom, and presently reached a room where there were lights. Then Diana saw her brother’s face and understood that he was mad or desperately ill, or both. The ghastly colour, the bloodshot eyes, the trembling hand—she saw it all. She had not known what change his trouble would make in him, but she knew it would be great. But she was startled now that she was face to face with him. It seemed too terribly real. She could not help it, she bent her beautiful fair head on his shoulder and threw her arms about him and sobbed aloud.

But Marcantonio only understood that she was there to keep him from his ends, from the one thing in the world that he wanted to do, and meant to do, and surely would accomplish. As she leaned on him and shed those bitter tears for him, he stood passive and dry-eyed, staring vacantly above her at the wall,

and his hands hung by his side, not offering to support her or to comfort her. He only wished she were gone again and had never come to trouble him.

It was only for a moment. Such outbursts of feeling were rare with Diana; people said she was a piece of ice, heartless, and without sympathy for any human being. They judged her by her face and by the supreme dignity of her manner, not knowing of the things she had done in her life that were neither heartless nor cold. But now she recovered herself quickly and dried her eyes and made Marc-antonio sit down. She looked at him intently as though trying to understand him. He had never met her so coldly before in his whole life, and there must be a reason for it—he was evidently beside himself with suffering, but his temporary madness would hardly take the form of a sudden dislike for herself unless there were some cause.

“You did not expect me so soon,” she said, speaking very gently. “It was a mere chance that I managed it.”

"I am very sorry," said Marcantonio in a monotonous voice that had no life in it and seemed not his own. "If you had waited a little while I could have saved you the journey."

"The journey is nothing," said she. "I am not tired at all, and I would come across the world to be with you."

"Yes," said Marcantonio, "I know you would. It would have been better if we had met further on."

"Further on?" she repeated, hoping he would give her some clue to his intentions. The old habit of confidence was too strong for him; he wished her away, but he could not help speaking and telling her something. He had never concealed anything from her.

"In Turin," he answered briefly.

"Ah—is he there?" asked Diana in a low voice.

"He sent his box there—he will go and get it."

"And then?"

"And then," said Marcantonio, the sullen

fire burning in his reddened eyes, "we shall meet."

Diana was silent for a moment, determining what to do. All this she had expected, but she had not thought to find her brother so changed.

"Tell me, Marcantonio *mio*," she said earnestly, "did you think I would prevent your meeting him?" He hesitated; she took his hand and looked into his face as though urging him to answer.

"Yes," he said hoarsely.

Diana understood. This was the reason of his evident annoyance at her coming. He thought she meant to prevent him from fighting Batiscombe.

"You know better than that," she said gravely. Marcantonio turned upon her quickly with an angry look.

"You prevented me before," he said. "If I had shot him then, this trouble would not have come. You know it—why do you look at me like that?"

"If you had shot him before," said she, "this would not have happened. But if he

had shot you—that was possible, was it not?—you gained nothing. If neither of you had killed the other, there would have been a useless scandal. The case is different.”

If she had found her brother overcome with his sorrow and abandoned to the suffering it brought, sensitive and shrinking from all allusion to his shame, she would have acted very differently. But she found him possessed of but one idea, how to kill Julius Batiscombe; he was hard as the nether millstone and unyielding; he seemed to have forgotten the wife he had loved so well, in the longing to destroy the man who had stolen her away. She felt no hesitation in speaking plainly of the matter in hand, since his feelings needed no sparing. But her sympathy was so large and honest that she did not feel hurt herself because he was cold to her; she understood that he was scarcely in his right mind and she could make all allowance for him. Few men could have done as much. Few men can ever really conquer their vanity—much less forget it.

Marcantonio did not answer at once. But her influence on him, as she sat there, was soothing, and he was gradually yielding under it—not in the least abandoning his one idea, but feeling that she might not hinder its execution after all.

“Do you mean to say,” he asked suddenly, “that you will not try to prevent my meeting with him?” He turned and looked into her eyes, that met his honestly and fearlessly.

“Assuredly I will not prevent you,” said she.

“Really and truly?”

“So truly that if I thought you had meant to leave him alone, I would have tried to make you fight him.” She spoke proudly in the pride of a brave race.

Marcantonio laughed scornfully in a way that was bad to hear. The idea had never struck him that he could possibly have not wanted to fight. But in a moment he was grave again.

“What a woman you are, Diana!” he exclaimed. It sounded more like himself than anything he had said yet, and Diana was encouraged. But she said nothing.

In her simple code, fighting was a necessary thing in the world. She had been brought up among people who fought duels under provocation, and it never entered her head, that, under certain circumstances, there was anything else to be done. Women often scream with terror at the mention of such a thing, but very few of them will have anything to do with men who will not fight when they are insulted. In preventing a challenge after the affair at Sorrento she had done violence to her feelings for the sake of Leonora's reputation. In the present instance that was no longer at stake. It was perfectly clear that her brother must have satisfaction from his enemy, as soon as might be. There was no conciliation possible. In her view it was honour or infamy for Marcantonio for ever—no less. She had heard of cases where the husband had simply ignored the whole matter, had laughed cynically and had said he would not risk his life for a woman who did not care enough for him to stay with him. But the woman was his wife, after all, whether she loved him or not, and Diana

heartily despised a man who could act in that way.

Duelling may be a conventional thing, but so is the "honour" of society at large. It is a patchwork affair altogether, and some of the pieces are clean and some are exceedingly dirty; nevertheless it is hung bravely up for a curtain and it covers a great many more sins than charity ever did. Everybody knows the sins are there, and everybody wants to have them hidden, bringing his or her little patch to make the curtain broader. Some help to enlarge it and keep it whole because they do not want to see what is behind and think that no one else should, hoping that the day may come when there will be nothing to conceal; meanwhile they bring great broad pieces of clean stuff that go a long way. Others come, who have more or less property concealed behind the curtain, which they would not have any one see for the world, and the dirty little rags they bring are sewn in, side by side with the spotless cloth—and so everything helps, and from a distance the curtain looks well

enough. Only, if any one wants to see what it covers, it is the simplest thing in the world to go round to one side and lift it—for it is not so very broad after all.

In some countries people find it a great nuisance to keep the curtain in order, and they agree to dispense with it altogether, promising each other not to look that way. And then, the moment any one thinks he is not observed he steals a glance at the forbidden sight. But if two happen to look at the same time, and catch each other at it, they call each other liars and blackguards for the edification of the rest. It is a very good arrangement, and costs no trouble when you are used to it.

As for fighting and not fighting, in countries where it is the custom, there are always some individuals who refuse on moral grounds. They say it is not right, and they will not do it. The “right” they do in refusing to meet people they have injured is frequently remarkable in their lives for its solitary singularity rather than for its importance.

Donna Diana had never hesitated, therefore,

in her view of Marcantonio's situation, and when he put the question to her she answered it boldly and naturally. But, somehow, he had not understood his sister before, though he had yielded to her, and he was astonished at her readiness to agree with him. He looked at her with a sort of admiration, and his feeling towards her changed.

"Then you will help me to find him?" he asked.

"I will stay with you until you do," she answered.

"It is the same thing," said he. "Will you come to Turin with me at once?"

"I will not leave you," she said. "We can go to Turin to-morrow if you like."

"No—to-night," he said, quickly. The idea of wasting twelve hours seemed intolerable.

But Diana had made up her mind that he must rest a while before doing anything more. She shuddered when she looked at his face and saw the dreadful changes wrought in six-and-thirty hours.

"If we start now," she said, "we shall arrive

in the evening. You could do nothing at night. Rest until the morning, and then we will go. You will need all the strength you have."

"I cannot rest," he said gloomily.

"You must try," answered Diana. "I will read to you till you are asleep."

He rose and began to pace the room. The doubt that she intended to keep him back sprang up again in his unsettled mind. He stopped before her.

"No," he said, "I will go to-night, and you need not come if you are too tired. You want to prevent me from going at all—I see it in your face."

Diana looked up into his face as she sat. No one but a madman could have doubted the faith of those grey eyes of hers, and as Marcantonio gazed on them the old influence of the stronger character began to act. He turned away impatiently.

"You always make me do what you like," he said, and began to walk again.

Diana forced herself to laugh a little.

"Do not be so foolish, dear boy," she said.

"I want you to sleep to-night, and to-morrow we will go to the world's end together. You will lose twelve hours somewhere, because there are certain things that cannot be done at night. Better make use of them now, and sleep, before you are altogether exhausted. I promise to go with you to-morrow. Do you mean to have an illness, or to go out of your mind? You will accomplish one or the other in this way, and there will be an end of the whole matter."

"*Ebbene*," said Marcantonio, unable to resist her will, "since you promise it to me I will do as you please. But to-morrow morning I will start, whatever happens."

"Very well," said Diana. "And now, dear brother, will you kindly give me some dinner? I have scarcely had anything to-day."

"*Dio mio!*" cried Marcantonio, "what a brute I am!" It was like him, she thought, to be angry at himself for having forgotten to be hospitable. The words assured her, for they sounded natural. There had been moments during the conversation when she

had thought he was insane. Perhaps it was more his looks than his words, however. At all events, as he rang the bell and ordered what was necessary, she felt as though he were already better.

One of her reasons for wishing him to stay a night in Rome was that he might immediately have a chance of growing calmer. Nothing distances grief like sleep. Until the first impression had become less vivid in his mind, she could not ask him questions about the circumstances of the flight. She guessed that, although he was willing, and even anxious, to talk of his future meeting with Batiscombe, it would be quite another thing to make him speak of the past fact. And yet she knew nothing of the details—not even exactly the time when it all happened. She half fancied that they must have got away by the sea, because it would have been so simple; but she had no idea of how much Marcantonio knew, nor whether the matter had yet in any way become public property. It was necessary, she judged, that she should

know something, at least, of the circumstances. No one but Marcantonio could tell her, and before he could be brought to speak he must be saved from the danger of a physical illness which seemed to threaten him.

Before long dinner was ready. It was ten o'clock, and the meal had been prepared for Marcantonio at eight; but he had behaved so strangely that no one liked to go near him, and the servants supposed that if he wanted anything he would ring the bell.

The two sat down opposite each other. Diana was tired and hungry; she had taken off her bonnet on arriving, and had gone straight to Marcantonio, and now she would not leave him until she had seen him safe in his room for the night. But in spite of the long journey, the fatigue, and the great anxiety, she was the same, as queenly and unruffled as ever, as smoothly and perfectly dressed, as quiet and stately in her ways. No wonder she was the envy of half the women in Europe. The half who did not envy her were those who had never seen her.

She watched Marcantonio as she sat opposite to him. It surprised her to see that he ate well—more than usual, in fact, and she attributed it to a sudden improvement which had perhaps been brought about by her arrival. She had expected that he would refuse to eat anything, and would support his strength on strong coffee and tobacco. She thought that at all events he would not be ill—but, again, as she looked at his face its deathlike yellowness frightened her, and the injected veins of his eyeballs made his eyes look absolutely red.

They hardly spoke during the meal, for the servants came and went often, and they could not speak any language together that would not be understood. Talking French before servants is a snare, they always understand; or else—like the solitary student who understood Hegel, and who only misunderstood him, after all—they make a point of interpreting their master's sayings crookedly.

After a time they were left alone, and they prepared to part for the night. Diana laid

her hand affectionately on her brother's forehead, as though to feel whether it were hot. He looked so ill that it hurt her to see him.

"You are worn out, dear boy," said she. "Go to bed and sleep."

"I will try," he said, rather submissively than otherwise. "But we will go to-morrow, of course," he added quickly, turning to her with a half-startled look.

"Of course," said she, reassuring him.

"Because," he said, "I told the detectives to telegraph to me there, and I gave them my address at the hotel."

"Detectives?" repeated Diana, starting a little and looking surprised. "What do you want them for?"

"*Diavolo!*" ejaculated Marcantonio savagely, "to find him, to be sure."

"Batiscombe is not the man to run away, or to need much finding," said Diana, gravely, with an air of conviction. She did not like the idea.

"When men mean to be found they leave an address," said her brother, between his teeth.

There was truth in what he said. Batiscombe ought to have let Marcantonio know his whereabouts, it was the least a brave man could do, and Batiscombe was undeniably brave. Diana felt a sharp sense of pain; the idea that her brother was hunting down, with detectives, like a common malefactor, the man who had once loved her so well; the idea that she was helping to find him in order that Marcantonio might kill him if he could, it was frightful to her. She was bitterly atoning for one innocent girlish fancy of long ago.

"Marcantonio," she said, almost entreatingly, "do not do it. Give up the police. I am sure he will meet you without that—"

"Ah yes!" he interrupted, "you know him. Of course you will not help me! I forgot that you were come to shield him—you—I know you will not help me!" He spoke fiercely and brutally, as he had never spoken to her before.

But mad or not mad, Diana would not submit to such words from any one. She turned white to the lips, and faced him in the light of

the two great lamps that burned on the table. The whole power and splendid force of her nature gleamed in her eyes, and thrilled in the low, distinct tones of her voice.

“What you say is utterly base, and ignoble, and untrue,” she said slowly.

He hung his head, for he knew he was wrong. He did not know what he said; indeed he had hardly known what he was doing all that day.

“I am sorry, Diana,” he said at last, quite humbly. “I am not myself to-day.”

Her anger melted away instantly. Himself! No indeed, poor fellow, he was not himself and perhaps never would be his old self again. He was so utterly wretched as he stood there before her with his head bent and his hands clasped together, so forlorn and forsaken and pitiful the moment the sustaining force of his anger left him, that no human creature could have seen him without giving him all sympathy and comfort. Diana went close to him and put her arms about him, and kissed him, and her tears wet his cheek. He

suffered her to lead him quietly away to his rooms, and she left him in the care of his faithful old servant.

“The Signore is ill,” she said. “Some one must watch in the outer room all night, in case he wants anything.”

Diana herself was exhausted, in spite of her strength and extraordinary nerve. There were times when she broke down, as she had done at Sorrento when she heard Julius and Leonora outside her window, but it was always after the struggle was over, when she was alone. Moreover, she had had the advantage of years of a perfectly serene life, during which no serious trouble had come near her, and her strength had increased with her maturity. It all stood her in good stead now, and helped her to bear all she had to suffer. She went to bed and slept a dreamless sleep that completely restored her. It is the privilege of very calm and evenly balanced natures to take rest when it can be had, and to bear wakefulness and fatigue better in the long run than extremely active and physically energetic people.

As for Marcantonio, he tossed upon his bed and dreamed broken dreams that woke him again and again with a sudden start; he dreamed he had found his man, and the excitement of the moment waked him. Then he dreamed he was quarrelling with his sister, and was suddenly wide awake at the sound of her reproachful voice. He was talking to Leonora, pleading with her and using all his eloquence to win her back, and she laughed scornfully at him—and that waked him too.

But at last he slept soundly for an hour or two, just before daybreak, and awoke feeling tired but more restful. The dawn came stealing through the windows, and he got up and moved about a little, with a sensation of enjoyment in the cool fresh air.

He looked into the glass, and started at his own face that he saw reflected there. It seemed like a hideous mask of himself, all drawn and distorted and pale. But had he looked at himself on the previous day he would have seen an improvement now. He was deadly pale, but no longer yellow, and his

eyes had lost the redness that had frightened his sister. He looked ill, but not crazy, and he felt that he could trust himself to-day not to say the things he had said yesterday.

He would go to Turin of course—that was settled—unless Diana was too tired ; but he would not have admitted such a condition when he went to bed the night before.

He rang the bell and ordered his things to be got ready. The old servant, who had slept on a sofa outside, looked haggard and unshaved, and stared suspiciously as he heard the order. But he did not dare to make any remarks, as he would have done if his master had been well. Marcantonio had been ill once before, when he was a boy of fifteen, and had on that occasion, when he was delirious, shown a remarkable tendency to throw everything within reach at the people about him when he did not instantly get what he wanted. The old man remembered the fact and was silently obedient, for the Signor Marchese looked as though he were ill again. The mildest people are often the most furious in the delirium of a fever.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER all, Julius was not quite certain whether Leonora had fainted, or was asleep. She had been comfortably settled in the boat at the first, and a quarter of an hour had passed in hoisting and trimming the sails and bringing the craft before the wind. She might have fallen asleep from sheer fatigue and weariness—Julius could not tell. He bent far down over the stern and fetched up a few drops of water from the sea with one hand, while the other supported Leonora's drooping head—the tiller could take care of itself for a moment—and he sprinkled her face softly and watched her; again—and she opened her eyes as from a pleasant dream, and looking up to him she smiled, and closed them again. He bent down and spoke almost in a whisper.

"Darling, are you quite comfortable?" She moved her head in assent, the quiet smile still playing on her lips. Then she lay quite still for a while, and listened to the rush of the water and the occasional dull wooden sound as the rudder moved a little on its hinges. The boat rolled softly from side to side in a long easy motion and glided swiftly down the bay. Presently Leonora moved, sat up, and looked about her, at the sea, and the land, and the fiery-crested mountain.

"Where are we going, Julius?" she asked, with a smile at the question.

"I am sure I don't know," said he, laughing. "There are lots of places we can go to. Ischia Capri—Naples if you like. Select, dearest, there is a good boat between us and the water and we have the world before us."

"But we must go somewhere where we can get some breakfast," said she gravely. "And where I can buy things," she added laughing again. "Do you know that this is all I have got in the world to wear?"

"That is serious indeed," said Julius.

“There are provisions and things to drink in the boat, but there is no millinery. We had better go to Naples.”

“I think I could manage for one day,” said Leonora, doubtfully. “I have brought heaps of handkerchiefs, and hair-pins, and Cologne water—they are all in the bag.”

“Handkerchiefs and hair-pins!” repeated Julius, and laughed at the idea. A woman leaves her husband, who worships her, scatters trouble, and tears, and madness broadcast, and she thinks of handkerchiefs and hair-pins and remembers where she has put them.

“Yes,” said Leonora, “they will be very useful. We could go to Ischia first and to Naples to-morrow night—or rather to-night, I should say. That is—if you think——”

“What, dear?” asked Julius.

“If you think it is quite—far enough.”

“We cannot go very far. It is six or seven hours from here to Ischia, if the wind holds. We should be there between six and seven o’clock.”

“I think that would be best,” said Leonora

in a tone of decision. She was silent for a moment. Presently she looked up into Batiscombe's face, and her own was white and beautiful in the moonlight. "I wonder," she said, "whether any one heard that noise the dogs made? Oh, the poor, poor kitten—it makes me quite cry to think of her!"

Yes, my lady Leonora—cry for the cat by all means—it was very pathetic in its last moments. But on no account shed a tear for your husband, or for anything he may suffer—the moonlight is far too, too delightfully, exquisitely pretty to think of such unpleasant subjects.

"Poor thing!" said Julius sympathetically. "But its ghost will not haunt the gardens, for it was amply avenged."

"Yes indeed!" said Leonora. "Oh, Julius, you are so strong—I like you."

Precisely, Madam; your husband never strangled any terriers for you. It was a great mistake on his part. He did not know how much you liked it.

"Thanks," said Julius, "you are awfully

good to like me." He laughed, but his hand caressed her hair tenderly, and Leonora was happy.

"It was just like us," said she, "to stop there at the top of the steps where we might have been seen in a moment—but I am glad. I hated those dogs."

"It was just as well," said he. "They would very likely have made more noise, and followed us."

"Oh yes—and just fancy the wrath when they are found to-morrow morning. But they might have bitten you dreadfully—I was terribly frightened."

"I fancy there will be more wrath about you, my dear, than about the dogs," said Julius, rather gravely.

"About me? Oh—I hardly know—perhaps. I do not think any one will mind very much."

"What does it matter who minds, as you call it?" said Julius, pushing her thick hair from her forehead tenderly, and looking at her with loving eyes. "What does it matter to us now? What can anything ever matter again?"

“Nothing, nothing, nothing dear,” she answered softly, and her head drooped happily upon his shoulder. They were as though alone in the boat, for the broad sail was stretched right across to catch the wind, and hid the men, who sat together forward, chattering in a low voice in the incomprehensible dialect known as the *lingua franca*, the free tongue in which all Mediterranean sailors understand one another, from Gibraltar to Constantinople, and from Smyrna to Marseilles. They did not care a rush what their master did, nor where he went; they had some confidence in his knowledge of the sea and of the coast, and they had entire confidence in themselves, whatever wind might blow. It was nothing to them, who came from the north coast, whether their broad-shouldered “signore” took a “bella signora” from Naples or Sorrento for a midnight sail in his boat. He paid well, to every man his wages, and he often gave them a few francs to drink his health. They had never had so good a “padrone” before, and they asked no questions, wisely distinguishing the

side of the bread upon which a bountiful providence had spread the most butter for their benefit. They also said that nothing ever mattered much so long as they got their pay.

Leonora had found at last the desire of her heart—the reckless, stormy passion, careless of everything but itself and its object, of which she had so often dreamed. She had found the man for her to love, and she did love him to distraction. As for the rest of the world, she was more persuaded than ever that there was nothing very much in anything after all. What she had was wholly sufficient in the present, the future was a future full of joy and love, and divested of everything that could possibly be wearisome, and the past was cut off, murdered, dead, and buried out of sight.

But though she had killed it and thrown it away, as Julius had done with the dogs, it had a ghost and a living memory that would haunt her for many days and weeks, and months and years. A life is not a dream to be forgotten, nor an old garment to be thrown aside at will.

Life is an ever present thing, and all our past is as much a part and parcel of to-day as the marks we bear in our bodies are portions of ourselves, no matter how we came by them, nor when.

Out of nothing, nothing can come. Out of confusion and vanity and pure selfishness, out of confused and incoherent fragments of half expressed wisdom, out of the very vanity of vanities, which is the vanity of wise words wrought into foolish phrases ; out of the shell of an imaginary self wrought fine and gilded to please the worst part of the real self—out of all these things, I say, what can come that is good ? or can anything come of them which is truly evil, seeing that, one with another, they are all but so many empty nothings, melted together and lost in the great void that receives the failures of the soul-world ?

If anything results from such a life it must be the realisation of nothing, which is the extinction and annihilation of that which is—and woe be to the destroyer ! We may destroy all hold and anchorage of mind and soul, we

may reason ourselves into a disbelief in reality in matter, in daily life, in good and evil. But always when we think that everything is done, and that our fabric of philosophy is faultless there arises the strong tide of human passion and creeps across the sands to our tower. At first we may watch the waves from a long way off, and laugh to see them break and overwhelm the very foolish people who have no tower on the shore and must swim for their lives or perish. But the tide rolls on toward us, and runs cruelly up, crashing and thundering in its rising might, till it rends and tears our flimsy castle out of the sands beneath our very feet, and we fall headlong into the rushing waters. And then we too must struggle like the rest, if we can ; and if we cannot, we must sink to the bottom, while those who learned when the tide was low and the water smooth, and have tried their strength in many a brave buffet with the waves, swim strongly over our drowned bodies.

It is easy to moralise, it is hard to live. That is the reason that great moralists are

generally either old men who have done with living and would like to teach other people, or else young men and young women who have not enough vitality to animate the most lymphatic oyster, but who manage to float about by their own inflation. These latter never save any one from drowning, and the former save very few. The people who can help others are the strong ones who can catch them just below the shoulder, by the arm, and support them and push them to land, themselves doing all the work. That is a watery simile, but most similes are but water, and can be poured into a tea-cup or into a bucket—they will take the shape of either.

The night wore on, the full moon sinking slowly to the west, so that after a time she was hidden from the lovers by the sails, and there was a broad shadow behind them. Still the breeze blew fresh from the land and carried them straight towards Ischia, and the boat rocked smoothly over the rolling water. Leonora rested on the thick cushions and her head lay nestled in Batiscombe's arm while he held

the tiller carelessly with his other hand, steering by the wind, in the certainty of making the right course. He did not speak, for he wanted her to rest, and so it came about that before long she fell peacefully asleep and Julius drew a light shawl tenderly about her, and kissed her ruddy hair, and looked out over the moonlit water, calmly as though he were sailing for his pleasure.

He was thinking what strange things happened in his life, and wondering within himself whether he could ever grow old and be like other people. But he could never be like other* people now, for he must live a life apart from the world, and create an existence of a new kind, utterly free from the ties and bonds and weariness of society. It would also be without the amusements, the gaiety, the glitter and the flattery of society. Batiscombe liked all that too, but he thought he could do without it very well. Just now the fascination of the hour was upon him. The sweet sea-breeze, the moonlight on the water, the swirl of the boat's wake—and, above all, the beautiful

woman by his side sleeping so gently and nestled so lovingly close to him—it was all perfect.

But with a curious duality that belonged to him he enjoyed the moment, and thought intensely of the future at the same time; not with any fear or regret or even with the anticipation of remorse for what he had done, but with a far-seeing love of combination, striving to know exactly what would happen and to provide for it.

He went over in his mind the many places to which he might take Leonora, and tried to select the most beautiful and the most retired—some ideal spot, not yet invaded by society. Society, in the long run, gets the best of everything; artists and poets and adventurous tourists may seek out an inaccessible region and keep it to themselves for a while, revelling in the solitude and driving off intruders by discouraging civilisation and affecting a barbaric display of shirt-sleeves, paint, and beards. But if the place really amounts to anything, so to say—if it is really

beautiful, really healthy or really convenient for flirting in the open air, there will surely come at last a stray princess of eccentric disposition and fond of a little discomfort. She will say it is simply too delightful, and so very natural, you know ; and in the course of a summer or two the society battalion will encamp there, the houses will be painted red and green in stripes, and there will be a band and a casino, and a royal personage.

It is very hard to find the kind of place Julius wanted, and he thought for a long time before he hit upon it. But at last he had a happy idea and was pleased with himself for having it, as he always was. Very cautiously he got a cigarette out of his pocket and lit it with one hand, steadying the helm with his elbow. He did it so smoothly and quietly that Leonora did not wake, and he puffed in silent enjoyment of the tobacco, taking care that the smoke should not blow into her face.

It was very like Julius Batiscombe to risk waking her in order that he might smoke,

for he was a selfish man and knew it, and delighted in it. But it came upon him in gusts and was not always a part of him; only, when it did come, it covered completely the better features of his nature. In carrying away Leonora, he had done one of the most absolutely selfish actions of his life, and for the time being there was nothing he would not do, so long as he could keep her with him and make her sure that he loved her. He knew well enough that she loved him. He did not want to know anything about his own motives. He was in love—that was motive enough for anything.

As a matter of fact, deep down in his soul there were other incentives at play; but he would not acknowledge that to himself. It was true, that since he had loved Diana he had never loved another woman as he loved Leonora. There was a charm about her that he could not explain, that overcame him and filled his whole life. His lingering feeling for Diana was always real when no other passion was in the way, and it

had never happened before that any one of his affairs had crossed her path. But now it had chanced at last, and the strong position she had taken against him from the first had roused a bitter opposition in him. It secretly delighted him to think of her anger, and sorrow, and mortification at the success of his enterprise. But, nevertheless, he loved Leonora with all the strength of passion that remained to him, and that was saying much.

Again, he had the vanity, in some directions, of half a dozen ordinary men. It is often a peculiarity that goes with unusual physical courage and strength, which he possessed in an eminent degree. But it did not go into his work, for he was an artist at heart, besides being a man of the world, and was never long satisfied with anything he wrote. It was the kind of vanity that hankers after the admiration of women, and would not take the admiration of men at a gift—an intensely virile characteristic of immense power. He would like to rule men, to lead them to do great things or to crush them under his heel

according to his mood, and he sometimes ground his teeth because he could do neither. But he did not want their admiration, much less their sympathy. They might flatter him, or abuse him—he was utterly indifferent. But he would sacrifice a great deal for the approbation of a woman, and he often got it; for women, generally speaking, like best the men who hang upon their words and will do anything under heaven for a smile and a word of praise—as is natural.

Consequently, Leonora's evident interest in himself had pleased Julius from the very first; he had often done things for the sake of hearing her say something flattering which had meant more than he had realised. There was no doubt whatever that his vanity had played an important part in bringing him into his present position. Nor was he a very exceptional man in this respect, save in the degree of his qualities. Hundreds of men fall in love every day with women who flatter them, and the passion is not less strong because it is of a low order.

It was over now, however, and the plunge was taken. The falling in love was accomplished, and the being in love had begun. Henceforth the two main considerations in his mind were to make life convenient and easy for Leonora, in order that she might not cease to love him out of discontent, and then to get over his inevitable meeting with Marcantonio as soon as possible and as well as possible. He easily saw that these two things were inseparable. If all question of future complication were not removed at once by a decisive meeting with Carantoni, Leonora would live in a state of fear and trembling for months to come. In order to meet him it was necessary to have some place of abode for the time when Leonora might be happy—of course she would not know of the encounter until it was over—and at the same time the spot must be so chosen as to be tolerably accessible. He had intended to go to France when it was over, and had therefore sent his box to Turin, meaning to take it as soon as he felt free to move; Turin suggested Piedmont, and Piedmont

suggested a place where he had once spent a month in the summer—scenery, trout-fishing, considerable comfort, and not a soul there excepting some of the local society of Turin who found it convenient and cheap. He at once determined to go there, and to send Marcantonio information of the fact, in order that he might find him as soon as he pleased.

He no more expected, or wished, to avoid a duel than Marcantonio himself. The one virtue which never deserted him was his courage. He would let his adversary have a shot at him if he liked, but he himself would fire in the air, of course. How could he be base enough to kill a man he had injured? But he was base enough to wantonly destroy the happiness of that man, all the same. It may be a very fine thing to stand up and let a man shoot at you without attempting to return the shot; but it is by no means fine to do the things that Julius Batiscombe had done to lead to such a result. He did not think much about it, to tell the truth, for he accepted the fact as the consequence of his action and

occupied himself in providing for it without any judgment of himself, for good or evil. He had once said to Leonora that the enjoyment belonged to the man who ate, and not to the man who carved, and she had guessed rightly, that, however well he might analyse the lives of others, he never analysed his own. He had got the forbidden fruit and he was glad of it, and meant to keep it all for himself, inwardly rejoicing at the anger of those who would have prevented him, if they could. And with all this, the fruit gave him an intense delight, independently of the triumph of having obtained it. He was not a man who tired of anything that he liked so long as the thing itself did not change and remained as sweet as ever.

There he sat at the helm all through the hours from midnight to dawn, and Leonora slept peacefully in the cool sea air, at rest after all her excitement and fatigue. Gradually the moonlight seemed to lose distinctness, while gaining more strength and permeating the shadows of the boat which had before been dark and well defined. The breeze blew cooler

and fresher than ever, bearing a faint chill in its breath, and the water, from being like black velvet strewn with diamonds, turned gradually grey and misty, so that the waves could all be seen with their small crests and sharp rough edges. In front the rocky height of Ischia seemed to tower to the sky, and soon it caught the first soft tinge of the dawn. Quickly the rosy light crept downwards, falling gently from tree to tree and from rock to rock, till it reached the water, and the sea rippled and laughed in the sweetness of the summer morning.

Leonora moved in her sleep, and Julius, who was watching her, saw her lips tremble a little as though she were talking in her dreams. Then she started slightly, put out her hand, and opened her eyes. The blood mounted to her cheeks as she met her lover's glance, and he looked from the colour on the water to the colour on her face, and he saw that the blush of the woman was fairer than the blush of the summer sea.

She sat up, and turned from him a moment, and her hands were busy with her hair.

"Have you slept well, my dear one?" asked Julius affectionately, "I am afraid you were terribly uncomfortable."

"Oh so well," said she, still looking away and deftly putting a hair-pin in its place. "But I dreamed just as I woke up."

"What did you dream, sweetheart?" asked Julius, stretching his stiffened limbs. He had scarcely moved for four hours; he could have borne it for four hours longer if he had not wanted anything—but he had risked waking her in order to get a cigarette.

"I dreamed about you," said she. "You behave so badly, I am not sure I shall forgive you—ever." She gave him a hesitating look as she bent her head to arrange her hair.

"Tell me, darling?" said he, laughing.

"It is nothing to laugh at," she answered. "And besides—I don't know whether I ought to tell you." She stopped and watched him with a little shy laugh.

"Please do—."

"Well—of course this is in the strictest confidence—you will never tell any one. Do

give me the bag, dear? I want the Cologne water."

"And the hair-pins, and the handkerchiefs?" added Julius, laughing as he stooped to get the bag out of the stern sheets. "Please tell me the dream."

Leonora took a handkerchief and wet it from the bottle of Cologne water. Then she began to dab it on her face.

"I dreamed that you"—dab—"picked me up in your arms and"—dab, dab—"carried me down the stairs"—dab, dab, dab—"and just as you were putting me into the"—dab—"into the boat, you dropped me into the sea." A furious succession of dabs, then more Cologne water and another handkerchief.

"But you said something about that last night. You made me put you down on the rocks, because you said you had dreamed I dropped you. Was that another dream?" Julius was watching her operations with a half amused interest.

"Yes," said she, drying her face, "I dreamed it all over again, just now."

“But when did you dream it first, dear? Yesterday?”

“Oh no! Ever so long ago—ages ago.” She looked down at the flower she had put in her dress at the last minute. It was still fresh, and she arranged it a little.

“Before you knew me?” asked Julius.

“Oh yes—that is—before——” she blushed again.

“When was it?” he asked, amused and delighted. She was beautiful in her freshness; she might have come up, a living Aphrodite, from the foam of the bay to sit beside him in his boat.

“It was before that evening,” she said at last, “when you met me in the church. How long ago is that?”

“About ten years, I should think,” said Julius gravely. It seemed an endless time.

“Is it not strange?—and then, that I should dream it all again—it is so funny. Why should you have dropped me? It would have been so easy to carry me into the boat, and yet you seemed to stumble on purpose and we

both fell in and were drowned. Is it not very odd?"

She seemed to have settled herself now, for the remainder of the journey; the sun had risen quickly over the land while they were talking, and she put up a parasol that lay on the opposite seat. She did it unconsciously, not realising that she had not brought one with her, but when she held it up, she looked at the handle and saw that it was not one of her own. Then she remembered.

"Did you get it from me?" she asked smiling.

"Yes," said Julius, "I knew you would want it, so I sent out for it last night."

"*Appoggiate!*" shouted one of the men from behind the sail.

Julius put the helm up accordingly, and, as the boat went off a little, a big fishing smack ran across her bows. A dozen rough fellows were lounging about in their woollen caps and dirty shirts. They laughed gaily at the crazy foreigners as they went by, and some of them waved their caps.

“*Buon viaggio, eccellenza,*” they shouted. Julius waved his hand in answer to the greeting. Leonora was pleased.

“At all events,” said she, “some one has wished us a pleasant journey. It was sweet of you to get the parasol, dear.”

So they chattered together a while and presently the boat went round the point of the island to the north side, and they took in the sails and the six men pulled her lustily along under the shore, until they reached the little harbour of Casamicciola.

“We can stay here and rest all day,” said Julius, as they entered the hotel on the hill, half an hour later. “We shall not be disturbed, and this afternoon we will sail over to Naples and you can do your shopping when it is cool.”

At half-past eight they sat down to a breakfast of figs and bread and butter and coffee. At the same moment over there in Sorrento, Temistocle laid the key of Leonora’s room on Marcantonio’s writing-table, and

edged away to make sure of an easy escape through the door.

“How perfectly lovely!” exclaimed Leonora, stopping in the consumption of a very ripe black fig, to look out at the sea and the exquisite islands that lie like jewels between Ischia and the mainland.

A waiter had brought a shabby book of ruled paper, with a pen and some ink. He asked if his excellency would be good enough to write his name. Julius took the pen and wrote something, glancing up with a smile at Leonora, who finished her fig in silence.

“Let me see,” said she, when he had done. He handed her the book, while the servant waited respectfully.

Julius had written simply “*Mr. and Mrs. Batiscombe, England.*”

“Give me the pen,” said Leonora. “Oh dip it in the ink, please—thanks!” She wrote something and gave him back the book. Underneath his writing she had put in another name.

“I wanted to write it,” said she with a little laugh. Julius looked, and laughed too.

“LEONORA BATISCOMBE” — that was all. But as she wrote it, Marcantonio, over there in Sorrento, fell upon the hard tiles with his mother’s diamond cross in his hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEONORA did all her errands—or as many as she said could be done in so short a time. There were a great many things, she explained, which she could have made when they were settled, but which would be in the way at present. Julius bought her a box, and wrote a label for it, and pasted it on the cover. She began to find out that, besides his other qualities, he was a very practical man, and understood travelling better than any courier she had ever had.

They had spent a few hours in Ischia as they had intended, and had then come over to Naples in a small steamer that plied daily between the island and the city. Julius paid

something to have his boat towed across, and when he was in Naples he paid the men a month's wages in advance, and told them to go back to Genoa and wait for him there. They might steal the boat—or they might not, he did not care. The thing had to be sent somewhere, and if it ever reached Genoa, so much the better.

He drove with Leonora up and down the Toledo for hours, stopping at all manner of shops, and buying all manner of things. Now and then he would succeed in paying for something, but she generally insisted on using her own money. It was fortunate that she had taken it, she thought, as it would have been so awkward to let him pay for everything. He remonstrated.

“All that I have is yours, darling,” he said.
“You must not begin with such ideas.”

“I do not mean to be a burden to you, Julius,” answered Leonora. “I am sure I must be much richer than you. Nobody ever made himself rich by writing books.” She laughed, and he laughed with her. It was so very

amusing to talk to each other about what they possessed.

"Ideas about being rich are comparative," said Julius. "If I sent Worth two or three hundred pounds for a dress every other week, I should certainly not be very well off. But——"

"Oh, Julius—what an idea! There is no one so cheap as Worth in the long run."

"I was going to say something very pretty," remarked Julius.

"Oh, I would not have interrupted you if I had known. What was it?"

"I was going to say that I must be richer than you—since I have got you, and you have only got me."

"You always say things like that," said Leonora laughing lightly. "Be sure that you always do—I like them very much."

"Ah," said Julius, gravely, "I will sit up all night and make them for you."

"They ought to be spontaneous," said Leonora.

"Everything that is pretty in the world

is spontaneous to you, my dear. But I have to work hard to make pretty things, because I am only a man."

"That is really not bad," said she, laughing again. She wondered vaguely whether he would always be the same. Her husband used to talk much like that at first. But he grew so dull, and when he said things he never looked as if he quite meant them. Julius said sometimes a few words—just what any one might have said; but there was a tone in his voice, and his eyes were so fiery. She loved the fire; it used to frighten her at first.

"We cannot stay here," said Julius, when they sat over their dinner at the hotel on the Chiaja. "It is altogether too ridiculously hot; it is a perfect caricature of a summer, with all its worst points exaggerated."

"Yes—but where shall we go?" asked Leonora.

"I had thought of a charming place," said Julius. "It is away in the Piedmontese Alps—all mountains and chestnut woods and

waterfalls: an old convent built over a torrent. Only the people from Turin go there."

"That sounds cool," said Leonora, fanning herself, though whatever she might suffer from the heat she never looked hot. "Let us go. When were you there?"

"Years and years ago," said Julius. "I used to catch trout with caddis-worms, and write articles about Italian politics. You may imagine how much I knew of what was going on, shut up in an old convent in the mountains. But it made no difference. Writing about Italian politics is very like fishing with worms."

"Why?"

"You sit on a bank with a red, white, and green float to your line. You have not the least idea what is going on under the water. Now and then the float dips a little, and then you write that the national sentiment of honour is disturbed. That is a bite. By and by the float disappears, and your line is pulled tight, and you think you have got a fine fish. Then you write that a revolution

is imminent, and you haul up the line cautiously, and find a wretched little roach or a stickleback has swallowed your hook. The red, white, and green float waves over your head like a flag while you get the hook out and bait it again. You make another cast, and you write home that order has been restored. On the other side of the bank sits another fellow, with a float painted red, white, and blue. He is the French correspondent. Sometimes you get his fish, and sometimes he gets yours. It is very lively."

"You used to say that a simile was an explanation and not an argument," said Leonora, rather amused at his description. She always remembered what he said, and enjoyed quoting him against himself.

"So it is. What I told you was an illustration of a correspondent's life—not an argument against the existence of very fine fish in the stream."

"You are too quick," said Leonora, with a laugh.

"One has to be quick in order not to appear

too awfully slow in comparison with you, dear," answered Julius at once.

"Again—there is no stopping you!" It amused her to talk to him, he was so ready—and always with something well turned, that pleased her. There was something, too, that was refreshing in hearing the small talk of a celebrity, often a little doubtful in grammar, and interspersed now and then with a little generous exaggeration that she liked. She had read his books, and knew what he could do with the language when he pleased. And most of all she liked to speak and to be spoken to in English—it seemed so much more natural.

It was no trouble to Julius to talk to her. With some people he was as silent as the grave, which produced the impression that he was very profound. With others he was ready for a laugh and a jest at any moment, and they thought him brilliant—but there were very few with whom he talked seriously. Leonora saw all his phases in turn, for she felt that if she did not know his character, she

was in sympathy with his mind and understood him.

But Julius was anxious to reach the spot he had chosen, in order to let Carantoni know of his whereabouts. He suggested to Leonora that if it was quite convenient to her they might go the next day, when she had had a good night's rest. She assented readily enough. To tell the truth, with all her gaiety and enjoyment of the novel situation, she disliked Naples, and she hated to feel that in the morning she would look out of her window across the bay and see Sorrento and think of her husband as being there. She did not know that when she laid her head on her pillow that night Marcantonio would be in the station in Naples, on his way to Rome, and not half a mile away from her.

"Are you ever sea-sick?" asked Julius suddenly.

"Oh, Julius! You know I am not," she said reproachfully. He laughed.

"No? I mean in a steamer. Boats are quite different."

"I don't know," said Leonora. "I have often crossed the Channel, and I was never ill at all."

"Oh, then of course it's all right!" said Julius. "You would not mind in the least. We had better go to Genoa in the steamer, it is very decent and much cooler than all those miles of rail and dust."

"Oh yes, far pleasanter," said Leonora.

And so they made their arrangements, and the next day—the day when Marcantonio was engaging the detectives in Rome—they went on board the *Florio* steamer and left Naples, and Sorrento, and Ischia, and all the countless reminiscences that attached to the glorious bay, and were carried up the coast.

"The dear place," said Leonora, looking astern as she sat in her armchair under the awning on deck, "I shall always love it."

"But you are glad to leave it, darling, are you not?" said Batiscombe, who stood beside her, and was looking more at her than at the coast, though he held a glass in his hand. It was a curious remark to make, one might

have thought, and yet it was natural enough, and did not jar on Leonora's thoughts. She was not sensitive in that way in the least. She did not mind his referring to the past in any way he chose.

"Glad? Of course I am glad," she answered, looking up into his face. "How could I not be glad?" She seemed almost vexed at the simplicity of the question.

"Then I am happy," said Julius, sitting down beside her. And he spoke the truth; for the time he was utterly and supremely happy. He felt indeed the grave and serious mood, which the bravest man must feel when he knows that in a very few days his life will be at stake. But his vanity told him he was going to fight for her, and that gave him a happiness apart; so he concealed the serious tendency of his thoughts, talking easily and gaily. It was his vanity that helped him most, telling him it was for her; and, as always in his life, the prospect of a woman's praise was a supreme incentive. He did not reflect that he was not to fight for Leonora's

honour, but for the greatest dishonour the world held for her.

The broad sun poured down on the water, but the west wind fanned their faces and the awning kept the heat from them. Leonora lay back with half-closed eyes, now and then carefully opening and shutting a fan she held. She was wonderful to look at, her marvellous skin, and the masses of her red hair—the true red of the Venetian women — contrasting strongly with her soft dark dress, and a Sorrento handkerchief of crimson silk, just knotted about her dazzling throat. She was a marvellous specimen of vital nature, of pure living liveness and elasticity, gloriously human and alive. And the man beside her was almost as singular in a different way ; he was so quiet, and moved so easily, and his bright blue eyes were so fiery and clear, his skin so bronzed and even in colour—there was strength about him too ; and the passengers as they came and went would steal a glance at the couple and make remarks, quite audible to Julius and Leonora, about the beauty of those “Inglesi.”

“Which do you like best, dear,” asked Julius presently, “the day or the night?”

“Oh—that night was so beautiful,” said Leonora; “I love the moon, and the freshness, and the white sails, and all.”

“Does ‘all’ include anything especial?” asked Julius smiling.

“What do you think?” asked she, instead of answering. Her red lips remained just parted with a loving smile.

“I don’t think,” said Julius. “I leave the thinking to you, my dear. You can do it much better. But I like the sunlight, the broad good sunlight, far more than the moon. It is so hot and splendid.”

“Yes; I suppose it is like you to prefer it. All men like the sun—and I suppose all women like the moon. At least I do. But you must always like what I like now, you know.”

“Including myself, I suppose?”

“Bah, my dear,” laughed Leonora, “you will find that very easy!”

How very unhappy she must have been, thought Julius. She had not a regret in the

world, it seemed; and the only fear she had shown had been when she stumbled on the descent, so that he took her up and carried her.

"Tell me," said he, "what did you do in all those dreadful days when we could not meet?"

"I did nothing but write letters to you—very nice letters too. You have never shown yourself properly grateful."

"No," said Julius, "I have not had time."

"What do you mean?" asked Leonora with a little frown.

"Why—it must take a long time to show you how grateful I am. A long time," he added, his voice sinking to a deeper tone that Leonora loved to hear. "It will take my whole lifetime, darling."

"Thanks, dear one," said she quietly, laying her hand on his. She did not mind the passengers—why should she? She would never mind the world again, as long as she lived, for the world would never care what she did any more.

Her experience of the world—or of what she

understood by the term—had not been very happy, though it had not been the reverse. She remembered chiefly the mere technicalities of society, so to speak. She had enjoyed them after a fashion, inveighing all the while against their emptiness and vanity, and now when she looked back she saw only a confused perspective of brilliantly lighted, noisy parties, of more or less solemn dinners, of endless visits to people who bored her, and of an occasional cotillon with a man she liked, in return for numberless dances with individuals who seemed to be trying to get dancing lessons gratis, or who tore furiously up and down the room till she was out of breath, or who caught their spurs in her skirts, and scratched her arms with their decorations. She did not remember how she had enjoyed motion for motion's sake, and had rarely refused to go out, in spite of the aforesaid annoyances. She did not remember the little thrills of pleasure she had felt, as Marcantonio was gradually attracted to her, till he was always the first to greet her and to put his name on her card for a turn, and was always the last

to bid her good-night, devoting himself to her mother when she was engaged with some one else. She did not remember the delight she had often experienced in discussing society with Mademoiselle Le Creux and Mademoiselle Le Vide, bowling over institutions with a phrase and destroying characters with an adjective. There were many things Leonora did not remember which had given her great pleasure a few months ago ; but most of them reminded her of her husband, and she did not want to be reminded of him in the least.

There was continually a sort of unconscious comparison going on between him and Julius Batiscombe ; she could not help it, and it had been perhaps the earliest phase of her love. Even at the moment when Mercantonio had offered himself to her, Julius was standing in the doorway, and she had wondered what he would have said if he had been making the same proposal. She knew, now. She thought she knew the difference in the intonation of the man who loved, and the man who merely wanted to marry. Ah—if she had only known

in time, things would have been different. She would have refused Marcantonio, after all his devotion, and she would have married Julius.

She did not understand that Julius would never have fallen in love with her then; that the mere possibility of being led into marriage reared an impassable barrier between him and the whole of youngladydom. He had made up his mind that he would not marry, and young ladies said he was the most obstinate bore they knew; which was very unkind, for he kept out of their way, and only bored them when he was obliged to talk to them, doing it systematically and successfully in self-defence. But Leonora innocently supposed that if Julius had met her more intimately, in time, he would have fallen in love with her just as he had done now, and would have proposed after six weeks' acquaintance, and they would have been happy for ever after. She chanced to think of this now, and she sighed.

"What is the matter, sweetheart?" asked Julius gently.

"Nothing," said she, "I was thinking of something—that is all."

"Tell me, dear," said he, bending towards her. She hesitated a moment, looking into his eyes.

"I was thinking," she said at last, "of something that happened once. Do you remember, at that ball, when you stood in the doorway and looked so dreadfully bored, and I was sitting not far off with—with the Marchese?"

"Of course," said Julius, calmly, "I imagined he was just proposing to you."

"Yes," said Leonora, in a low voice, "he was."

"I wish he had been at the bottom of the sea," said Julius, fiercely. Indeed, the idea disgusted him, being as much in love as he was. Nevertheless, he thought she was a singular woman to refer to the thing—so very soon. He had at first expected that she would never wish to mention her husband to him; at least, not for very long; but she seemed rather to seek the subject than to avoid it. He mused for a moment, looking out under his

half-closed lids, as was his habit when he was thinking. Suddenly a smile came into his face.

“Do you remember, dear, when you and he raced me in the boat on the bay, one afternoon, ever so long ago?” It was not much more than six weeks.

“Yes—perfectly,” said she. “Why?”

“Have you any idea where I was going?” asked Julius, laughing a little.

“Not the least. You were not going anywhere; you were out for a row, I suppose, because you wanted the air.” She looked a little puzzled.

“If you had not overtaken me, I should never have seen you again,” he said, looking at her affectionately.

“What do you mean?” she asked, rather startled.

“Simply this. I was running away. I was engaged to dine with you that evening, and I was going to Naples to get out of it. I would have sent a telegram about urgent business—or anything.”

"What an idea!" she exclaimed, laughing.
"Why did you do that?"

"Because I knew what would happen if I stayed," said he, softly.

"But you did not care for me then?" she asked, quickly.

"Oh yes, I did," he answered; "and I knew I should care a great deal more." His eyes burned in the bright light of the afternoon.

"But I did not love you in the least then," said Leonora, demurely.

"No, of course not—and I did not flatter myself that you would. But I knew I was going to love you with all my heart." Again their hands met for a moment, and a couple of sailors, who watched them from a distance, nudged each other and grinned.

"When did you first begin to care, dear?" he said presently.

"Seriously? What a silly question, Julius. How can I tell?"

"It was after I found you in the church, was it not?"

"Yes, indeed. Ever so long after that!"

"About two days?" he suggested gravely.

"How absurd, Julius," she said with a little air of offended dignity that was charming. "You know it was ever so long."

"I wonder what you thought of me, when you turned round and saw me looking at you in the church," said he. He really had not an idea, and was curious to know.

"I thought you were very rude," said she. "And afterwards I thought you were very nice."

"I did not mean to be rude," said Julius, "but I could not help going in. I was in love with you, and I knew you were there."

"In love—already?" asked Leonora.

"Why—yes—it was at least a week after I tried to run away," said Julius innocently.

"It was exactly two days," said Leonora. They both laughed, for it was quite true. It was very pleasant to recall the beginnings of their love, for it had all been sweet, and easy; it seemed so to them, at least, as the foreshore hid Sorrento from their sight, and with it the scene of all they were discussing.

It was a beautiful voyage, along the coast in the summer sea. There was always enough breeze in the daytime and there was the moon at night, and they always felt that if they were quite alone, on land, it would be even more charming, if possible. It is a great thing in happiness to know that there is to be more of it, and more and more, till at last the heart has its fill of joy.

They reached Genoa, and rested themselves for a day and a night in the glorious rooms of an old palace, turned into an hotel by the profane requirements of modern travellers. But it is very agreeable for travellers to sleep in palaces, by whatever names they are called, and it is foolish to say that moderns should build new buildings instead of making use of old ones when they have them ready to hand.

There is a set of people in the world, who deal in cheap sentiments and get themselves a reputation for taste by abusing everything modern and kneeling in rows before everything that is old. They grind out little mediæval tunes with an expression of ravished delight,

and tell you there is no modern music half so good—in fact, that there is no modern music at all! Or they garnish themselves in queer white robes and toddle through a vile travesty of some ancient drama; or they build houses of strange appearance and hideous complication of style, having neither beauty without nor comfort within: and last of all, they say to themselves, Verily, we are the most artistic people in the world!

One of these persons could not have passed an hour in the old palace that the Genoese have turned into an hotel. The bare idea of such profanity would have produced artistic convulsions at once and untold suffering in the future by the mere memory of it. But neither Batiscombe nor Leonora were people of that sort. Julius took a very different view of life, believing to some extent in the simple theory that useful things are good and useless things are bad, and that everything that really fulfils its purpose must have some beauty of its own. Moreover Julius had very little reverence, but a profound intelligence of the comfortable;

he would have slept as well in a king's tomb as in an American hotel, provided the furniture was to his taste in respect of length and breadth and upholstery. As for Leonora, she had been brought up chiefly in Italy, and never troubled herself with the intricacies of the art question in that country, taking everything to be natural so long as she always had the very best of it. And at present, being wholly in love, and having her heart's desire, she would even have been willing to put up with less luxury than usual. Her talent for supremacy, as Julius used to call it, had taken a person for its object, and found the dominion of a heart more interesting than the dominion of fashionable luxury, the finest horses, or even Mr. Worth.

"I used to hate hotels," said she to Julius late in the evening, "but they seem very pleasant after all. There is never any fuss about anything; and I always seem to get just what I want."

"Oh—hotels are very well, if one understands them," he answered. He did not explain

to her that her comfort was chiefly due to his *savoir faire*. "You would soon find it a great bore though," he added.

"I am sure I should not," said she. "You are so clever that you make everything seem easy for me."

Julius laughed, out of sheer satisfaction. These were just the little speeches he loved most from women, and, most of all, from Leonora. It would seem a harmless vanity of itself, but it leads to doing acts of forethought and courtesy for the sake of the praise instead of for the sake of the woman.

"It is very good of you to say so, my dear," he answered, modestly. "But we will change all that, by and by. When the heat is over we will go away, and live in the Greek islands. There are places worth going to, there."

"Oh, of all things how delightful!" cried Leonora, carried away by the new idea. "And have a house by the sea, and a boat, and Greek servants—how lovely!"

"Meanwhile, dear," said Julius, "we will go

and be cool in the old Carthusian monastery. It does not take long from here."

And so they left Genoa and reached Turin, where Batiscombe found his box—the one that Marcantonio intended to watch so carefully—and took it away; thence they went to a place called Cuneo, a little southwards by the railway, in the Maritime Alps, which Leonora said were beautiful; and then they drove in an ancient diligence to the Certosa di Pesio, an old Carthusian monastery, as Julius had said, built over a wonderful mountain torrent and surrounded with ancient chestnut trees. Through the valley that opens away to northward you can catch a glimpse of Monte Rosa, when the setting sun gilds the snow, and the breeze brings down with it the freshness of the Alps. Leonora was enchanted with the place, with Batiscombe's choice, with him, with everything.

"And to-morrow you will show me where you used to catch fish and write your articles on Italian politics?" said she, as they came in from a short walk late in the evening.

That night Batiscombe despatched a letter to Rome.

CERTOSA DI PESIO, CUNEO,
MARITIME ALPS,
August 31.

“The Marchese Carantoni will find Mr. Julius Batiscombe at the above address, with a friend.”

That was all, but it gave Julius infinite satisfaction to send it. He had grudged the days that had passed before he could send Carantoni the information. As for the “friend,” he had seen two or three cavalry officers about the place as soon as he arrived, and he knew that he could rely on the assistance of some of them. Duels are easily arranged in Italy.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Marcantonio met Diana in the morning she noticed at once the change in his appearance. He was still very pale, and his face was drawn in a peculiar expression ; but he did not look so wild, and his eyes had regained their clearness.

Diana greeted him affectionately, but made no remark about his health, thinking it would annoy him. She herself had slept soundly and began the day with a new supply of strength.

“ You are still determined to go to Turin ? ” she said, with half a question in her voice, but as though it were quite certain that he would answer in the affirmative.

"Yes," he said, "I am quite determined. It is the best thing I can do."

"I was wondering this morning," said Diana, "whether we ought not to let our uncle know. It seems to me that he ought not to hear it from strangers." Marcantonio eyed her suspiciously.

"You cannot expect me to go and tell him now," said he. "The train leaves in an hour—there is not time."

"Of course not," said Diana, seeing how quickly he suspected her of wishing to interfere with his plan. "But, if you like, I will write and tell him."

"We can write from Turin," said he moodily. "No one knows yet."

He hurried her to the station, and got there long before the hour of departure. He was determined not to miss the train, and until he was seated in the carriage and the train rolled out of the city he could not feel sure that Diana would not stop him. He was somewhat relieved when they passed the first station on the way to Florence, and he

saw that he was fairly off. Donna Diana sat opposite to him and watched him, thinking sadly of the last journey they had made together, when he took her to Sorrento by the night train. He looked quiet, though, and she thanked Heaven things were no worse; he might so easily have done himself a mischief in the first outbreak of his solitary grief.

She still hoped for a chance of learning how it had all happened, for she was very much in the dark, and had no means of learning anything except what he might choose to tell her. Perhaps the intense inquiry in her mind reacted on his, as often happens between brothers and sisters. At all events, he began to speak before half an hour had gone by.

"I have not told you anything about it yet, Diana *mia*," he said. "I have been so busy, so many things to do." He passed his hand over his forehead as he spoke, as though trying to collect himself.

"Of course," said Diana gently. "Do not

tire yourself now, dear boy. Another time will do just as well. I know all that is absolutely necessary."

Marcantonio laughed slightly and a little foolishly, and again put his hand to his head.

"Oh no," he answered, "I shall not tire myself. You do not know anything about the—the—occurrence."

"No," said she, "that is true."

"They went away at night," said Marcantonio quickly, and then stopped.

"Pray do not tell me about it, dear brother," said Diana, rising and seating herself near to him on the opposite side of the carriage. She laid her hand on his arm, trying to soothe him, for she feared a return of his old state.

"But I must tell you," he said impatiently, and she saw it was useless to protest. "They went away at night," he continued, "in a boat. I heard the dogs barking, just for a moment, and then they stopped, and I went to sleep. I went to sleep, Diana," he cried savagely, "when she was running away with him, and I could have killed

him as easily as possible. I could have killed them both—oh, so easily !” He groaned aloud and clenched his thin hands.

“Hush !” said Diana, softly.

“I could have killed them as easily as he killed the dogs and stopped their barking,” he went on ; “he killed them both, wrung their necks—*poverini*—as though they were not right to call me. And I never guessed anything though I heard them !”

He was working himself into a frenzy, and Diana was afraid he would go mad then and there. She tried to draw his mind to another part of the story. She was a woman of infinite tact and resource.

“Yes,” said she, “I am sure you could. But how long was it before you telegraphed to me ?”

“How long ? I do not know,” he said, and seemed trying to recollect himself.

“Was it in the afternoon ?” asked Diana, glad to fix his attention on a detail.

“Let me see—yes. I meant to send it from Castellamare—the despatch I mean—and

instead I stopped the carriage at a little town on the way—I forget the name, but there was a telegraph office there—and so I sent it sooner.”

“Yes,” said Diana. “I got it at about seven o’clock. My husband was very quick and got a carriage, and brought me as far as Genoa.”

“How good of him !” exclaimed Marcantonio. “How is he ? And the children, dear little things ; are they all well ?”

His face changed again and a pleasant smile showed that he had forgotten his troubles for a moment. Diana was surprised at the ease with which she could distract his attention, and she determined to make use of the power to her utmost. It would be something gained if she could keep him quiet during the journey. She began immediately to speak of her children, a boy and girl of four and three years old. She told him about their games, their appearance, their nursery maids and their French governess. She branched off into a dissertation on the beauties of the Riviera, and still he listened and made intelligent answers and talked as though

nothing had happened to him and they were travelling for their amusement. Seeing that she was accomplishing her object, she went on from one subject to another, telling him all manner of details about her life in France, in Austria, and other places where her husband's official duties had called him during the five years since her marriage. Only about Rome she would not speak, fearing lest the smallest reference to the scenes he had recently passed through might take his mind back to his great grief.

And, all the while, she marvelled at his calmness, and at the ease with which she could amuse him. For he was really amused, there could be no doubt. He laughed, talked in his natural way, and seemed enjoying himself very well, smoking a cigarette now and then, and commenting on the weather, which was abominably hot.

"Of course," said he, "we shall find it much cooler in Pegli."

Diana started quickly, and then looked away to hide her astonishment.

“Of course,” she answered, “it is very much cooler there.”

Did he really fancy he was going to Pegli? Had he forgotten Turin and his errand? Was he gone stark mad? She could not tell, and was frightened. It might have been a slip of the tongue—but he said it so quietly, as though he were anticipating the delights of the climate. Nevertheless, she did not dare to pause, and she talked bravely on in the heat and the dust.

At one of the stations the train stopped ten minutes for refreshments. Marcantonio said he would get out and buy a sandwich and a bottle of wine. He sprang nimbly from the step, and Diana watched him as she sat by the open door of the carriage. He looked more like his old self than she had seen him since the catastrophe, and she watched with loving eyes, wondering how he would bear what was to come, and for the first time wishing that he might be kept always in this state, without the necessity of a meeting with Batiscombe.

Presently he returned with the provisions—

a rough-looking brace of sandwiches, and a bottle of wine.

"It is the best I could do," he remarked. "It is the last *pæse* in the world." He still looked cheerful and entirely himself. Diana watched him closely, hoping and praying with all her might that he would remain so—for ever, even if he were out of his mind. Anything would be better than to see him suffer as he was suffering that morning. She began to talk again, eating a little of the sandwich, for she was tired, and needed all her strength. He ate, too, and drank some of the wine, but he no longer listened as he had done before, and he did not answer nor make a remark of any kind. Diana had taken up what he said about the station, and was talking about travelling in France.

Suddenly Marcantonio's colour changed—he grew pale again, his eyes stared and he dropped the bread he was eating. Diana was terrified, brave as she was, for she knew that his mind had gone back to his trouble—how, she could not tell; but it was clear that for a space he

had wholly forgotten it. He seemed to take up the thread of his terrible narrative at the point where he had been led away from it.

"Temistocle brought me the key," he said, and his voice sounded hollow again and far away. "He had told the servants she had gone to Rome before daybreak, and that I had gone with her—ha! ha!—he is a cunning fellow. I gave him something for himself—I think I did—I am not quite certain." Again his ideas seemed to wander, and he tried to remember the detail that had escaped his grasp. Quick as thought Diana seized the opportunity.

"Did you give it to him in the evening?" she asked.

"I am not sure. I am not quite sure that I did give it to him after all. Oh, I cannot remember anything any more." He clasped his hands to his head as though striving to compress his brain and to compel it to action. The train moved away from the station.

"You can send it to him in any case," suggested Diana, in an agony of sympathy and

suspense. She would have added "from Pegli," if she had dared; but she was not sure he would remember his stray remark, or whether he had meant it. In a moment it was too late.

"Of course," cried Marcantonio, delighted with the idea. "I can send it from Turin. He deserves it well. There will be time—" he hesitated and spoke slowly—"there will be time—yes, there will be time, before I find *him*." His voice fell almost to a whisper, barely audible to Diana in the noise of the train as it gained speed in starting. He seemed unconscious of her at the moment when he said the last words, and she sat with clasped hands and set lips, not knowing what to expect next. In a little while he began again. She had been too much struck by his quick change of manner to find the thing to say, in time to lead him off.

"I went into her room," he said. He stopped and fumbled in his pockets, producing at last the cross of sapphires and diamonds. "I found this," he added, showing it to Diana.

She would have taken it, but he held it nervously in his hand, more than half concealed. "Do you know it?"

"Yes," said she as quietly as she could. "It belonged to our mother."

"It is beautifully made," he said suddenly, looking closely at it. "It is most beautifully made, and the stones are very valuable. Should you not think that they are worth a great deal?"

"They must be—the sapphires are a very good colour and the brilliants are large," said Diana, humouring him. "I wonder where it was made?"

"I do not care where it was made," said Marcantonio roughly. "I have got it again. I will give it back to her—she must have missed it." He looked at Diana with a strange pathetic inquiry in his weary eyes.

"Leonora?" asked Diana, in surprise. Marcantonio started as though he had been stung. He had thought of his dead mother.

"Leonora? Ah!" he cried with a sort of muffled scream. "It belonged to Leonora—

Ugh !” With a quick movement he flung the jewel at the window. It chanced that the pane was raised to keep out the smoke on that side. The heavy cross cracked the plate glass and knocked a small piece out of the middle, but fell to the floor.

Marcantonio remained in the very act, as he had thrown it, for one instant. Then his head sank on his breast and his hands fell to his sides helplessly.

“Oh, Diana, Diana,” he moaned piteously, “I am mad.” Then he began to rock himself backward and forward as though in pain.

It was no time to break down in horror or grief, and Diana was not the woman to waste idle tears. The cross had fallen at her feet. She had instantly stooped and picked it up and hid it away, lest he should see it again. Then she heard him say that he was mad, and she made a desperate effort. She took him strongly in her arms, almost lifting him from the floor, and laid his head upon her breast and supported it, and took his hand. He was quite passive ; she could do anything with

him for the moment—he might have been a child.

Diana bent down as she held him in her arms and kissed him tenderly on the forehead and breathed soft words. It was a prayer.

Poor woman! what could she do? Driven to the last extremity of agony and horror, sitting by and seeing her brother going mad—raving mad—before her very eyes, unable to soothe his grief or to strengthen his soul by any words of her own, not knowing but what at any moment he might turn upon herself—poor woman, what could she do? She breathed into his ear an ancient Latin prayer. What a very foolish thing to do! She was only a woman, poor thing, and knew no better.

O woman, God-given helpmate of man, and noblest of God's gifts and of all created things—is there any man bold enough to say that he can make praises for you out of ink and paper that shall be worthy to rank as praise at all by the side of your good deeds? You, who bow your gentle heads to the burden, and think it sweet, out of the fulness

of your own sweet sympathy—you, whose soft fingers have the strength to bind up broken limbs and rough torn wounds—you, who feel for each living thing as you feel for your own bodily flesh, and more—you, who in love are more tender and faithful and long-suffering than we, and who, even erring, err for the sake of the over-great heart that God has given you—is it not enough that I say of you, “You are only women, and you know no better”? What greater, or higher, or nobler thing can I say of you, in all humbleness and truth, than that you are what you are, and that you know no better? What better things can any know, than to bear pain bravely, to heal the wounded, to feel for all, even for those who cannot feel for themselves, and to be tender and faithful and kind in love? And even, being given of Heaven and loved of it, that you should turn in time of need and trouble and say a prayer for strength and knowledge, even that is a part of you, and not the least divine part. So that when the man who cannot suffer what

you can suffer, nor do the good that you can do, sneers and scoffs at your prayers and your religion, I could wring his cowardly neck to death. Even poor Leonora, praying philosophical prayers to a power in which she did not in the least believe, was not ridiculous. She was pathetic, mistaken, miserable, perhaps, but not ridiculous.

Perhaps Diana had done the best thing, out of pure despair. The long familiar words, spoken in her soothing voice, at the very moment when he was conscious that he was on the verge of insanity, chained his faculties and gradually brought him to a calmer state. Perhaps, also, the strong magnetic power of his sister acted more forcibly on him from the moment when he suddenly abandoned himself to her influence. Like many people who possess that strange gift, she was wholly unconscious of it, and she sometimes wondered why it was that those about her yielded so easily to her will. Be that as it may, Marcantonio lay quite still in her arms, and at last his eyelids drooped, his limbs relaxed, and

he fell into a deep sleep. The hot hours wore on, and the train rolled by the towns and hamlets and castle-crested hills towards Florence, and still he slept, and Diana tenderly supported him, though her arm ached as though it must break, and her eyes were dimmed from time to time with the sight and consciousness of so much misery.

At length as they entered the station she waked him. He was quite calm again, and collected, but very sad as she had seen him that morning.

“Have I slept like this so long?” he asked.

“Yes, dear boy,” said Diana.

“Dear, dear Diana, how good you are,” he exclaimed, and he kissed her hand gratefully. “We have an hour here, to dine, before the train starts.”

“Will you go on at once?” she asked. She had vainly hoped that he might be induced to stay in Florence. But he had recovered himself enough to know perfectly well what he was doing.

“Yes—certainly,” said he. “We shall arrive

in the morning." She dared not object nor make a suggestion, not knowing how soon he might break out again in some fresh burst of madness.

"Very well," she answered, as a station porter took their handbags and smaller properties, "let us dine at once."

She watched him and saw that he ate with a good appetite. She had heard that lunatics always eat well, and she would almost rather have seen him too sad to care for his food; nevertheless she thought it would do him good.

There is probably nothing more wearing, more wracking to the nerves, than the care of an insane person. To be ever on the watch, expecting always an outbreak or a painful incoherence, to attempt to follow the sensible nonsense that madmen talk, always endeavouring to distract the attention from the forbidden subject, are efforts requiring the highest tact and the greatest coolness. Diana could accomplish much by sheer common sense and endurance, and more, perhaps, by the strong affection that

had always existed between her brother and herself. But she felt instinctively that she was not equal to the task, even while she hoped that Marcantonio was not really mad.

She was mistaken, however, as any indifferent person would have seen in a moment. He was insane, and on the verge of becoming violent. Nothing but her wonderful courage and strong will had kept him within any bounds, and he might at any moment become wholly uncontrollable.

She would have stopped in Florence if it had been possible, but it seemed dangerous to thwart him at present, and she felt sure that in Turin she could get the help of some first-rate physician. So she submitted once more, and in an hour they were off again, in a reserved carriage, as before, flying northwards toward the mountains, where the road winds so wonderfully through a hundred tunnels, in its rapid ascent.

It was a very long night for Diana. In all her many journeys she had never felt fatigue such as this. Marcantonio would sleep for an

hour and then start up suddenly and begin to talk, sometimes asking questions and sometimes volunteering remarks that showed how his mind was wandering. Once or twice he showed signs of returning to the account of his doings after Leonora had left him, but Diana was able to check him in time, for he was growing tired and yielded more easily to her will than in the daytime.

At last they were safe in the hotel, and Marcantonio was in his room, intending to dress, he said, before going out. Diana was no sooner assured that she was free from the responsibility of watching him for a few minutes than she sent for the proprietor of the hotel, inquired for the address of the best physician in Turin, and despatched a messenger with a very urgent request for his attendance.

The apartment she had taken with her brother consisted of a large sitting-room, with a bedroom on each side of it. Marcantonio's room had but that one door, which she could watch as she lay on the sofa, awaiting the arrival of the doctor.

When he came at last, breathless in his haste to put himself at the service of the great lady who sent for him, he talked very learnedly for half an hour, after listening to all Diana told him with grave attention. He could not see the patient of course, and the interview took place in a small antechamber from which he could escape, if Marcantonio were heard moving within. He was of opinion that it was not a case of insanity, but of temporary derangement of the faculties from the severe strain they had received. The sudden manifestations of violence were natural enough to an Italian—if it had been the case of an Englishman, it would have been different, because, as the doctor said, half in earnest and half in jest, “*Inglesi*” were generally mad to begin with, and anything beyond that made them furious maniacs. He had a man, he said, long accustomed to dealing with lunatics. He would send him disguised as a servant, and he could be in constant attendance, thus relieving Diana of the care of watching the Marchese. He himself would call every day

and inquire, and would be ready at a moment's notice to remove him to a place of safety. In his present state, he said, to shut him up, and treat him as though he were insane, might very likely make a permanent madman of him.

The doctor retired, leaving Diana somewhat reassured. All that he had said seemed reasonable, and she would strictly follow his advice. Meanwhile, she went to her own room, feeling sure that she could hear Marcantonio's door open, if he finished dressing and came out. But Marcantonio rang his bell at the end of an hour, and sent word to his sister that he felt tired and had gone to bed, and would not rise till midday.

Poor fellow—she was pleased at the intelligence, but the fact was that his mind had strayed again; he had forgotten the object of his journey and being worn out had gone to bed like a tired child. The new place, the strange room, and the necessity of unpacking his clothes himself, had confused him, and driven everything else out of his head.

Before he awoke, the confidential man had arrived, arrayed in the ordinary dress of an hotel servant. He was a quiet individual, with strong hands and iron-grey hair, neat in his appearance, and a little hesitating in his speech; but his eyes were keen and searching and he moved quickly. Diana was pleased with him, and understood that the doctor had given her good advice, and that Marcantonio would be safely watched. The man said he would serve them in their own sitting-room, and perform the offices of valet for Marcantonio, and be altogether in the position of a private servant, which, however, was not his profession, as he took care to add.

When at last Diana and Marcantonio met, each rested and refreshed, he looked the less weary of the two. Diana had suffered too much to be entirely herself, and for the first time in her life felt as though she had taxed her strength too severely. Moreover the strain was not removed, but increased hourly. Her woman's instinct told her that, in spite of the doctor's opinion, her brother was actually out

of his mind, perhaps past all recovery. His sudden cheerfulness was horrible to her and made her shudder when she thought of the magnitude of what he was forgetting.

“Let us take a carriage and see Turin, *Diana mia*,” he suggested gaily, as they finished their lunch and he lit a cigarette. “I have never been in Turin with you. There are some very pretty things to see.”

“By all means,” said she readily. “Let us go at once.”

The confidential servant was despatched for a carriage. The idea of seeing sights with his sister pleased Marcantonio, and he never relapsed into his sadder self during the afternoon. Diana did not know whether to be glad or sorry; his forgetfulness was terrible, but his memory was worse. She remembered the scene with the cross on the previous day, in the railway carriage, and she thought that if insanity brought peace it was better to be insane.

They drove about and saw what was to be seen—the great squares, the memorial statues,

the armoury, where the mail-clad wooden knights sit silently on their mail-clad wooden horses, and they drove out at last to Moncalieri, in the cool of the evening. The confidential servant sat on the box and directed the driver, pointing out to Diana and Marcantonio the various objects of interest, so that Carantoni suspected nothing. The man acted his part perfectly.

“How charming it is here!” exclaimed Marcantonio, admiring the trees and the life, and the gay colours at Moncalieri. “Why did we not think of coming here before, *ma chère*?” He spoke in French, which he rarely did with his sister, though he had always done so with his wife. Diana hardly noticed it at the moment—she was obliged to answer something.

“It was hardly the right season for it before this, I suppose,” said she. “But now we can stay as long as we please.”

“Oh yes,” said he, in his old way, “if it is agreeable to you, I ask nothing better. It is infinitely more pleasant than Sorrento. I never liked Sorrento, I cannot tell why. It

never wholly agreed with you, *mon ange—n'est-ce-pas ?* ”

“I was always well there—well enough, at least,” answered Diana, puzzled at this new phase of his humour.

“Ah no, you were never well after Diana left us. She is so good, she makes every one well !” He spoke pleasantly and naturally.

It was horrible, and Diana started with a new realisation of his state. He no longer recognised persons—he took her for Leonora !

But some new object attracted his attention, and he chattered on, almost to himself, almost childishly, but with a sweet smile on his pale, delicate face. Diana could scarcely restrain her tears—she, who had not wept for years until lately !

Poor Diana ! Batiscombe and Leonora were sinfully, wholly, happy with each other—Batiscombe selfishly so, perhaps, but none the less for that, and Leonora with a wild delight in her new life, that swallowed up the past and gilded the present. Even poor, crazy Marcantonio, chattering and making small French

jokes about the people's dresses at Moncalieri, was happy for the moment. Only Diana, the brave woman who had fought for the right so well, seemed cut off from it all, bearing the whole burden on her shoulders, and silently bowing her queenly head to the storm of woe and grief and destruction.

CHAPTER X.

DIANA would have taken her brother away from Turin if she could, but there was a danger that the mere suggestion might revive the fixed idea that had driven him mad. His illusions had not the absolutely permanent character that is the most hopeless. For instance, on the evening of the very day when he had called his sister by his wife's name, he had known Diana perfectly well, and had sat for an hour talking about old times with her. Whether, at such moments, he had any recollection of recent occurrences would be hard to say; and the doctor advised for the present that he should have perfect quiet and should be allowed to amuse himself and to be amused

in any way which seemed best. In the course of a day or two the doctor saw him, coming on pretence of seeing Madame de Charleroi. He felt now, he said, from Marcantonio's manner, that he would recover before long, though his memory concerning the circumstances of the time when he was insane would probably be very uncertain.

But Diana felt relieved at this, and devoted her time to her brother from morning till night, reading to him, driving with him, or talking to him, as the case might be. She could do nothing more for the present. Turin is a pleasant city enough, the weather was not excessively hot, and the hotel was large and comfortable. In the course of time it would be possible to move Carantoni and take him to Paris, but at present any sudden change of place or surroundings was to be deprecated.

A week passed in this way, and Diana grew pale with the constant strain of anxiety, and the great dark rings circled her grey eyes. But she bore bravely up, and rose each day with strength to do what lay before her. She

wrote to her husband, and he offered at once to come and help her to take care of Marcantonio, but she would not let him come, fearing the effect of a new face—even that of an old friend like Charleroi. She received all the letters that came to her brother, and was surprised that there were no communications from the detectives he had employed. The fact was that Marcantonio had given a separate address to them, and as they discovered nothing, after the manner of most detectives, they only systematically telegraphed that they had confidence of being on the track. The telegrams were addressed to another hotel, and were dropped into the box for unclaimed letters and were never heard of again. Diana knew that business communications would be harmless in Marcantonio's present state, and when any came she let him have them. He would read them over and often discuss with her the information they contained, and at last he would let her answer them, saying it was very good of her to save him so much trouble.

All these letters came from Rome, being

forwarded by the steward who lived at the Palazzo Carantoni and managed the business of the household. Others came, re-directed over the original address, from friends in different parts of the country, and these Diana carefully put aside unopened, fearing always that some passing reference or message to Leonora might disturb him and bring on a fresh outbreak. She could always distinguish the business letters, because they were either directed in the handwriting of the steward, or they bore the outward and visible printed address of the lawyer, farmer, or merchant, from whom they came.

In the week they had spent in Turin there had been already twenty or thirty communications of various kinds. Poor Marcantonio never knew that his sister sorted the mail for him. It was brought to him by the confidential servant, and he always took it and went to his room with an air of great importance to "get through his business" as he expressed it. He was evidently proud of doing it, showing that unaccountable vanity in small

things which characterises so many lunatics. Indeed he had always been proud of his attention to details, and now it became a sort of passion, though he was never able to carry out his intentions, and always left the unfinished work to Diana.

On the fourth of September Julius Batiscombe's letter, directed to Marcantonio in Rome, had come back to Turin. Julius had marked it "very urgent," and the steward had looked at it, had thought Batiscombe's handwriting indistinct, and to secure greater certainty had put it into another envelope and directed it in his own business-like way. The consequence was that it was mistaken for a common business letter, and handed to Marcantonio with the rest.

It seemed to be the last blow that an evil fate could strike at the unhappy man, and it was a terrible one in itself and in its consequences.

He sat at his table by the window, opening one letter after another, and looking over the contents with a pleased expression, a little

vacant perhaps, but not altogether without intelligence. There was a lacuna in his mind, and sometimes he was conscious of being confused by faces and things about him, but he was still capable of understanding the questions about his estates, and farms, and buildings, though he always seemed to lack the energy to write the directions with his own hand.

He turned over the sheets and folded each one neatly and put it back into its particular envelope. Then he opened the one from the steward and found in it a letter directed to Rome in a strange hand.

He held it in his fingers with a puzzled look for a moment; it seemed as though one letter had suddenly become two. Then he understood and smiled a little sadly at his own weakness of comprehension, and broke the seal.

The effect was not instantaneous. He read it over again, and a third time, his face still vacant, and he put his hand to his head trying and striving with all his might to remember. The week of insanity had done its work and

Diana need not have feared that he would be easily recalled to an understanding of the past. But it was not wholly gone yet; he would try to remember. He rose to his feet, and perhaps the slight physical effort helped to stir his dulled mind.

Suddenly he trembled violently from head to foot, and his colour changed from the natural complexion it had taken of late to a deadly pallor. For an instant his whole nature seemed to be convulsed, he reeled to and fro and caught himself by the heavy frame of his bedstead, staring wildly about, and fell backwards across the pillows, clutching the counterpane to right and left of him with his two hands, his face distorted and horrible to see.

It only lasted for a moment and he regained his feet, stood still for a few seconds, and passed his hands across his eyes, and seemed at once to recover his faculties. He took Batiscombe's letter again and read it over, as though fixing the few words and the address in his mind. The vacant expression of ten

minutes ago had changed to a look of supernatural intelligence and cunning. He put the letter in his pocket and sat down at the table. He opened some of the envelopes again and scattered the papers about, eying the effect rather critically. He then took his dressing-case, opened it, and removed one small tray, and then a second. In the bottom of the box was a revolver, bright and ready, with all its appurtenances, a few cartridges lying loose in their little compartment. The weapon was loaded, but he carefully opened it and examined each chamber, turning it round slowly by the light. It was not a large pistol, and when he was sure that it was in order, he put it carefully into the inside pocket of his coat, and surveyed the effect in the glass. No one would have suspected that he was armed.

He saw that his hat was ready in its place, and he rang the bell and sat down at his table once more, holding a letter in his hand, as though reading. The confidential servant appeared.

“Will you please to bring me a lemonade?” said Marcantonio, with perfectly natural intonation. The man bowed and retired to execute the order. His master seemed better than usual, he thought; the appearance of the papers and Carantoni’s bland smile had completely deceived him.

As soon as he was alone he took his hat, felt that he had his purse in his pocket, and opened the door to the sitting-room. Diana was not there, for she generally wrote her own letters until Marcantonio appeared with his correspondence, asking her to answer it for him. The servant was gone to get the lemonade and Marcantonio slipped quietly out on tiptoe.

Once upon the main staircase of the hotel he ran nimbly down, humming a little tune in a jaunty fashion, to show everybody that he was at his ease. Of course the people in the house had no idea that he was insane. It had been Diana’s chiefest care to conceal the fact from every one; and Marcantonio walked calmly past the porter’s lodge into the street, and took a cab. It was nearly midday and

the thoroughfares were less crowded than in the morning and evening; the cab flew rapidly over the smooth pavement to the station.

There are many trains to Cuneo in the summer season, and before very long Carantoni found himself in a smoking-carriage with three or four men, all reading the papers and smoking long black cigars with straws in them. He lit a cigarette, bought a paper just as the guard was closing the doors, and he rolled out of the station, looking just like anybody else. He pretended to read, and no one noticed him.

When the servant returned with the lemonade and found that Marcantonio was gone, he did not suspect what was the matter, but put the glass on the table and went back to the antechamber and waited at his post. He waited a few minutes and then knocked at Diana's door, and asked if the Signore were with her.

"No," said Diana quickly, and came out into the sitting-room in her loose morning gown. "Where is he? Is he not in his room? He never comes into mine."

She went to his door and knocked.

“He is not there,” said the man, who by this time was thoroughly frightened. “He sent me for a lemonade. He looked better than usual, and was sitting just there, at his table, reading his letters. When I came back he was gone. He seemed entirely himself, better than I have ever seen him.”

Diana was frightened and puzzled. After all, it was quite possible that Marcantonio had taken it into his head to go out by himself. He had never suggested such a thing yet, and always seemed unwilling to cross the threshold alone, but since he was so much better that day, he might have gone out. It was possible. She would not have believed that without some immediate cause he could have fallen back into a remembrance of his troubles; for she had studied his moods very carefully and was convinced that, as the doctor said, there would always be a blank in his mind now, destroying the memory of those three or four days. She glanced hastily over the papers on the table. They were all of the usual sort, for

Marcantonio had taken Batiscombe's letter with him.

Nevertheless, she was very much frightened, and was angry with the confidential servant for not having sent some one else to get the lemonade. She lost no time in despatching him to make inquiries. He was really an active man, and understood his business thoroughly, but Marcantonio's manner had completely deceived him, and he had conscientiously thought his charge perfectly safe. Maniacs have more than once deceived their keepers and their doctors, and Marcantonio seemed to have fallen into a very different sort of madness—rather foolish and gentle than cunning and dangerous.

The servant soon discovered that Marcantonio had passed the porter's lodge and had taken a cab, not many minutes before; but no one had heard the order he gave to the driver. There were no more carriages on the stand. The man lost no time, but ran down the street till he found one, and was driven to the station, as he was, bareheaded and clothed in a dress-

coat and a white tie, after the manner of hotel servants in the morning. His experience told him that crazy people generally made for the railway when they escaped. But he was too late. A train had just left—he made anxious inquiries of every one, describing Marcantonio's clothes and jewelry, which he knew by heart. No one had noticed him. He might not have come to the station after all.

But a dirty little boy elbowed his way through the crowd of railway porters and guards that soon surrounded the man—and the boy listened.

“Had that signore a great ring on his finger, with a black stone in it, and a red one on each side?” he asked.

“Yes,” cried the confidential servant. “You have seen him?” He seized the small boy by the arm and held him fast.

“Yes,” said the little fellow; “but you have no need to pinch me like that. I sold him a paper, and he gave me a silver half-franc, and I noticed his fingers and his ring.”

The servant released him.

Some one else had noticed the ring, which was very large and brilliant—a great sapphire with a ruby on each side of it. The individual remembered hearing the gentleman ask for the train to Cuneo. The confidential servant rushed back to the hotel, after ascertaining that there would not be another train for two hours.

He told Diana what he had learned, and she listened attentively. She was pale and quiet, and she did not reproach the man again. It was of no use now. She had dressed herself, and she sent for a cab; and then she also was driven to the station, the man accompanying her. She did not speak except to give her orders.

She went at once to the station-master, an extremely civil individual with a great deal of silver lace.

“Can you give me a special train to Cuneo at once?” she asked.

The station-master was in despair, he said. There was only a single track, and it would be impossible to arrange the line at such short

notice. He bowed, and looked grave, and put everything in the station at the disposal of the magnificent lady who ordered special trains as other people order cabs. But he could do nothing. Diana hesitated. Something must be done at once.

“My brother,” she said, “took the last train to Cuneo, and I desire to stop him. He—he is insane.”

It was a hard thing to have to tell a stranger, a railway official, and Diana was whiter than death as she said it. She would rather have put a knife into her heart.

The station-master was graver and more polite than ever. He could telegraph to all the stations to have the passengers watched as they descended. Would she give him a description—the name, perhaps?

It had to be done. She gave the details, and the telegram was sent. Meanwhile she sat in the station-master's private office, to wait for more than an hour until the next train should be ready.

The consequence of all this was that when

Marcantonio finally reached his destination, he was politely asked, in company with the other passengers, whether he had seen or heard of an insane gentleman called the Marchese Carantoni. But his newly-found cunning did not desert him. He shrugged his shoulders, and said he did not know the gentleman. He himself looked so quiet and dignified, that no one could have suspected him of being the person, and the short description telegraphed would have answered to hundreds of Italians all over the country. He had, of course, expected to be pursued, as lunatics often do, and he was prepared to baffle every attempt. His quiet look and frank smile were a perfect passport. He even inquired of a porter at the station how he could best reach the Certosa di Pesio, and the man told him it was an hour's drive or more, and got him a little carriage for the journey, and received a few sous for his pains.

Marcantonio leaned back against the moth-eaten cushions and smoked a cigarette and looked at the scenery. He hummed a little

tune occasionally, and, when the dirty driver was not looking, he put his hand into his breast pocket and felt that his pistol was in its place, and then the cunning smile passed over his features.

He had managed it all so well—there could be no mistake about it. He chuckled as he thought how Batiscombe would expect to receive the visit of a third party, and would thus be suddenly brought face to face with the principal. He thought he could anticipate just how Batiscombe would look, and he revelled for a while in the contemplation of his hatred. He had forgotten nothing now, except that he had ever forgotten his vengeance for a moment.

On and on he rolled in his rattling little cab. Through a long and gradually-ascending valley, thickly clothed with chestnut-trees of mighty growth. By the roadside ran a stream, that gradually became a torrent as the inclination of its course grew steeper and the road wound up towards the source. Here and there the water fell over a natural weir of dark

brown rock, forming a deep pool below, where the trout lurked in the shadow. Again the thick woods receded a little on each side, and the bed of the stream, now shallow from the summer heat, grew broad and stony; and further on there was a bit of grassy bank overhung with many trees, and the small river swept smoothly round.

Suddenly the carriage drew up before an old stone gateway that seemed to start out of the foliage, and there was a noise as of a deep fall of water, at once wild and smooth. Marc-antonio had reached the Carthusian monastery at last. His purpose was almost accomplished.

It is a strange building in a marvellous situation. Those old monks knew where to live, as they have always known in all ages and countries—from the priests of Egypt to the monks of Buddha, from the Benedictines of Subiaco to the holy men of ancient Mexico, they have all reared spacious dwellings in chosen sites, where the body might live in peace and the soul be raised, by contemplating the beauties of the earth, to the imagination of

the beauties of heaven. They were wise old men ; some of them were good, and some bad, as happens in all communities in the world ; but they were men who did the earth good in their day and found out the places that have often become cities in our times, whereby hundreds of thousands of souls have profited by their choice.

The Certosa di Pesio, where Julius and Leonora had taken up their abode for a time, is turned into an establishment for cold-water cures. There are generally some fifty or sixty people there from Turin and the neighbourhood who take the baths, or not, as they please, and lead a pleasant life for a few months in the great cloistered courts and the bright gardens and out in the endless chestnut woods. A cool breath of the Alps blows down the valley, and the rush of the water, dammed up by a strong weir of ancient masonry, and continually pouring down in a steady, musical roar, pervades all the cool rooms and the sounding halls and passages. It is an ideal place for the summer, almost unknown to foreigners. It is no wonder

that Julius had thought it the very spot for Leonora to rest in until the heat was over. A little way from the buildings, up the valley, a dilapidated summerhouse overhangs the stream. Sitting there you can see the whole wonderful outline of the convent buildings, crowned with chimneys which the old monk-architects seem to have delighted in greatly, giving them a variety of strange and grotesque shapes such as I never saw anywhere else. Julius and Leonora used often to come to the old summerhouse in the afternoon, with their books, which were seldom called into requisition, and they would sit side by side for hours, till the evening sun warmed the colours of the pine-trees on the heights to a green-gold and reddened the far-off snows of Monte Rosa with the last, loving touch of his departing light.

An obsequious individual came forward from the archway as Marcantonio drove up to the gate. Marcantonio eyed him, and perceived that he was a functionary of the pension.

“Is there an English gentleman here?” he asked; “a certain Signor Giulio Batiscombe?”

His voice was very calm, and had a certain suavity in its tones; he smiled, too, as he asked the question.

“*Si, signore,*” answered the man, bowing and gesticulating toward the building. “Certainly. A handsome signore, with his wife—both *Inglese*. They arrived on the thirty-first of last month—five days. Will the signore do the favour to come in? I will inquire whether the English gentleman is at home.”

The slightest shade passed over Marcantonio’s face at the mention of the wife in the case. But the man would not have noticed it. Marcantonio felt sure he had not betrayed himself.

“I will wait here,” said he, “while you inquire.”

The man disappeared, and Marcantonio was alone. He looked up at the windows in the grey walls, and saw no one. Nevertheless, at any moment Batiscombe might appear—from the house or from the woods—he might be taking a walk. It seemed a very long time to wait.

He put his hand into his breast-pocket. The stock of the revolver just curved over the edge of the cloth inside his coat; he could get at it without trouble. He longed to take it out and examine it; to see whether it were still in perfect order; and he peeped in when the driver was not looking, just to catch a sight of the lock and the bright barrel. Then he smiled to himself, and hummed a tune, assuming an air of quiet indifference—acting all the time, as only madmen can act, as though he were on the stage before a great audience. It was only for the benefit of the driver of his little carriage, a rough fellow, who had not shaved for a week, and wore a dirty linen jacket, his hands black and his eyes red with the wine of the night before—that was the audience; but Marcantonio acted his part with as much care as though he were in the presence of Batiscombe himself. There must not be the smallest chance of an interruption to his plan.

At last the man returned, bowing with renewed zeal. He came forward with one

hand extended, as though to help Marcantonio to alight.

"The English signore is in the garden," he said. Marcantonio smiled more sweetly than ever and got out of his conveyance.

"You can wait," he said to the driver, and the latter touched his battered straw hat.

Marcantonio followed the man through a great court, where there were trees, into a long, tiled passage that seemed to run through the house, and, on the other side, he emerged into a garden, thick with laurel-trees and geraniums. The man led the way. Marcantonio's hand crept stealthily into his breast-pocket underneath his coat, and raised the lock of the revolver very slowly. The man in front did not hear the small, sharp click.

"Where is he?" asked Marcantonio, very gently, still smiling an unnaturally sweet smile. The servant had stopped and was looking about.

"I was told they were here," said he "but they must be in the summerhouse outside."

Again he led the way to a small door in the garden wall. It was open.

“There they are, signore,” said he, pointing with his finger and standing aside to let Marcantonio pass.

He looked, and saw two people sitting in the dilapidated old bower above the water, not twenty yards from where he stood.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. Diana had taken the train at two, and could not reach Cuneo till six. Even then she would not know where to go without many inquiries.

CHAPTER XI.

LEONORA'S utter recklessness of delight could not last very long. It was a strange mood, as unnatural and uncontrollable at first as her husband's madness. She could not help enjoying to the utmost the new life that had so suddenly begun for her. She knew in her heart that she had bought it at a great price, and she knew that she must make the most of it or she would have to reproach herself with the bargain.

It was easy enough at first. The quick change had thrown all her thoughts into a new channel. From the midnight departure she had no more time to think, until the long, quiet days at Pesio. There were moments

when she was on the verge of thinking, of remembering the past, and wondering how her husband had acted. But she felt that it would be very unpleasant to reflect on these things. It might take her a long time to get out of the train of thought, as it used to do long ago whenever she had one of her fits of philosophical despair; she was able to put it off, and she seemed to be saying to herself, "I shall have time to think about it, and to satisfy my conscience by feeling the proper amount of regret by and by."

Of course she did not say so much in so many words, but the unconscious excuse for what she knew an unprejudiced outsider would call her heartlessness went on presenting itself whenever she felt the beginning of a regret. Deeper even than that, and almost hidden in the sea of self-deception, and passion, and riotous love of life, lay the reef on which the ship of her happiness would some day go to pieces—the ultimate knowledge of the wrong she had done, and of her own cruelty to Marcantonio and weakness to herself.

But in Pesio the time came ; terribly soon, she thought, though her suffering was only at its beginning. Each morning brought a dull sense of pain, that came in her dreams and became the terror of her waking. She knew before she opened her eyes that it was there, and the first returning consciousness was the certainty of sorrow. It soon wore away, it is true, but she grew to dread it as she had never dreaded anything in her short, luxurious life. It needed all her strength and energy to shake off the impression, and it required all Batiscombe's love and thoughtful care to make it seem possible to live the hours until the evening.

That was in the morning—in the brief moments when Leonora, like most of us, had not yet silenced her soul, and trodden it under for the day, and it spoke bitter truth and scorn to her, so that she could hardly bear it. Then, at last, she was honest. There was no more self-deception then, no more possibility of believing that she had done well in leaving all for Julius ; she could no longer say that

for so much love's sake it was right and noble to spurn away the world—for the world came to mean her husband, her father and her mother, and she saw and knew too clearly what each and all of them must suffer. Their pale faces came to her in her dreams, and their sad voices spoke to her the reproach of all reproaches that can be uttered against a woman. Her husband she had never loved; but in spite of all her reasoning she knew that he had loved her, and she understood enough of his pride and single-hearted nobility to guess what he must suffer while she dragged his ancient name in the dust of dishonour. Her father was never to her mind; for he was a Philistine of the kind that have hard shells and very little that is soft or warm within them; but she knew that he had treasured her as the apple of his eye, and that his old heart would break for his daughter's shame. Her mother was a worldly woman, loving Leonora because she had obtained a success in society, and upbraiding her with never making the most of it; but Leonora knew how her mother's

vanity must be bowed and trampled down by the deep disgrace, and that her vanity was almost all she had of happiness.

And so it came to pass that after a little time the old tax-gatherer, Remorse, began to put Leonora in distress for his dues, and she was forced to pay them or have no peace. He came in the grey of the morning, when she was not yet prepared, and he sat by her head and oppressed it with heaviness and the leaden cowl of sorrow ; and each day she counted the minutes until he was gone, and each day they were more.

Julius saw and pondered, for he guessed what she suffered, and understood now her terrible recklessness at the first. All that a lover could do he did, and more also, employing every resource of his great mind to fight the enemy, and always with success. He could always bring the smile and the brightness of glad life to her face at last, and when once his dominion was established there was no return of sorrow possible for that day ; his stupendous vitality and brilliant, overflowing

strength fought down the shadows and chased them out.

On the morning of the 4th of September, Leonora and Julius were walking together in the chestnut woods near the monastery. She had been less sad than usual at her first waking, and Julius hoped that the time was coming when she could at last feel accustomed to her new position and would cease to be troubled with the ghosts of the past. He was over-confident, and thought he understood her better than he really did. He was laughing and talking gaily enough, enjoying her happy mood and the freshness and beauty of the bountiful nature around him.

Julius stopped from time to time and picked a few wild flowers that grew amongst the moss and the grass of the wood. Leonora loved flowers, and loved best those that grew wild. It was one of the few simple tastes she possessed.

"It is not much of a nosegay," said Julius, as he put the sweet blossoms together, and tied them with a blade of grass. "It is too late for the best wild flowers here." He gave her

the little bouquet with one hand, and the other stole about her waist and drew her to him. She smelled the flowers, and looked up at him over them, a little sadly.

“The time will come, I suppose,” said she, “when there will be no more flowers at all.”

“Never for you, darling,” he answered lovingly. “There will always be flowers for you—everywhere, till the end of time.”

“What is the end of time, Julius?” she asked softly.

“Time has no end for us, dear,” he said. “For time is measured by love, and nothing can measure ours.”

They were near an old tree whose roots ran out and then struck down into the ground. The moss and the grass had grown closely about the great trunk’s foot, and made a broad seat. They sat down, by common accord.

“Can there be no end to our love—ever?” she said.

“Should we be where we are, if either of us thought it possible?” he asked.

“It *must* be whole—it *must* be endless—

indeed it must," she answered—clinging to the thought which gave her most comfort.

"Do you doubt that it is?" asked Julius, the strong earnestness of his passion vibrating in his deep tones.

"No, darling," she answered; "I do not doubt it—only you must never let me."

"Indeed, indeed, I never will!" said he. He meant what he said. Men are not all intentional deceivers—but they forget. They are less faithful than women, though they are often more earnest.

Is it not the very highest power of love not to allow a doubt? And how many men can say that their lives have been so ordered toward the woman they love best, that no doubting should be reasonably possible in her mind? Few enough, I suppose.

"I have been thinking a great deal lately Julius," said Leonora presently.

"Tell me your thoughts, dear one?" said he, drawing her to him, so that her head rested on his shoulder, and his lips touched her hair.

"You know, dear," said she, "what we have

done is not right—at least——” she stopped suddenly.

“Who says it is not right?” asked Julius, with a touch of scorn in his voice.

“Oh, everybody says so, of course; but that makes no difference. Nobody would understand. It is not what people say. It is the thing.” She stared out into the woods as she leaned against him.

“How do you mean, sweetheart?” he asked.

“It is not right, you know. I am sure of it.” She shook her head gently without lifting it. Then she added, “It is all my fault.”

“You shall not say that, my own one,” said Julius, passionately. He was really grieved and troubled beyond measure.

“Ah—but I know it so well,” said she. “You must help me to make it right—quite right.”

“It is right—it shall be right! I will make it so,” he answered. “Only trust me, darling, and you shall be the happiest woman the world holds, as you are the best. God

“bless you, dear one.” He kissed her tenderly, but she tried to turn away from him.

“Oh, no, Julius—God will not bless me. I have only you left now. You must be everything to me. Will you, dear? Say you will!”

“I do say it, my own darling,” he answered fervently. “I will be everything to you, now and for ever and ever.”

He was astonished and puzzled by the sudden outbreak. She had never spoken like this to him before, though he had expected it at first, and had wondered at her indifference. But now it seemed to have come upon her suddenly with a great force, and she would not be comforted.

“And I say it too,” she said, passionately. “I will be everything to you, now and for ever and ever. We will give our lives to each other, and make it right.” She wound her arms about him, and hid her face against his coat.

“How can true love, like ours, not be right?” said Julius, clasping her to him.

“God has put it into the world, dear, and into our hearts.”

Oh, the blasphemy and the hollowness and the cruelty of those words! Even as Leonora lay in his arms and felt his kisses on her hair, loving her sinful love for him out to the last breath, she knew that it was not true what he said so fervently,—and she knew that he did not believe it, that no man can believe a lie so great and wide and deep and awful.

But the sun does not stand still in the heavens for a man's lie; he hears too many untrue speeches, and sees too many false faces in his daily task of shining alike upon the just and the unjust—he is used to it and goes on his way; and time follows him, striving to keep pace and to swell the puny minutes of its pulse into an eternity.

Such moments—when the rising sorrow and sense of shame that a woman feels are choked down and crushed by the overwhelming energy of falseness in the man she loves—are passionate, even terrible; and they may come often, but they never last long.

Half an hour later, Julius and Leonora were wandering on through the woods and their talk had taken again its ordinary course. The morning was passing, and as Batiscombe talked and amused and interested Leonora, her doubts and fears disappeared, for the time at least, and her old sense of enjoyment returned again, sweeter to her now than ever before, in proportion as it was more difficult for her to attain it. She was happy again, and the clouds were riven away and rent to shreds by the strong breath of her stirring passion.

They walked for a while, and then returned to their mid-day breakfast and spent an hour over it in the cool, darkened hall, which had once been the refectory of the monastery, and was now the dining-room of the people who came to the water-cure. Julius had suggested to Leonora that they should have their breakfast and dinner in their own rooms, but she said she liked to see the people. It amused her to watch their faces and to wonder about them and criticise them. They were so unlike the people she had known hitherto, that there was

a freshness of amusement to her in learning their ways.

And by and by they had their coffee in a little sitting-room of their own that overlooked the torrent, and Julius smoked a cigarette and read the papers a little, amusing her with his daring comments on the conduct of nations and individuals. He was a man who was never afraid to say what he meant—not only to Leonora, over a cup of coffee in the summer, but to the world at large, in his books and articles. That was one reason why the world at large always said he was an uncommonly fine fellow, with a great deal of pluck and judgment. For the world at large likes rough strength and keen wit, always understanding that the strong language is not applied to itself, but to its neighbour, next door.

At four o'clock Julius and Leonora went out again. Julius carried a pair of shawls, and a book and Leonora's silk bag with the silver rings—the same she had used to bring her handkerchiefs when she fled from Sorrento. They went into the garden and out among

the laurels and the geraniums for a few minutes, but Julius was sure there would be more breeze outside, in the old summer-house over the water; for the garden was sheltered by high walls all around, and the sun was still hot, almost at its hottest at four o'clock on the 4th of September.

Accordingly Julius took the things in his hands and the two went out of the garden by the door in the wall and left it open. They walked down the short open path to the old summerhouse, and Julius made Leonora very comfortable with the shawls for cushions upon the old, wooden bench which many generations of people had hacked with their knives and adorned with the insignificance of their unknown names.

Side by side they sat in the glory of the summer's afternoon, and the birds perched on the grey old ribs of the summerhouse and hopped upon the untrimmed creepers that grew thickly about it, making their small comments to each other about the two people who sat below them, and great

green and pink grasshoppers skipped into the open space and out again, a perpetual astonishment in their round, red eyes; all nature was warm and peaceful and happy. The lovers talked together a little, enjoying the sense that speech was not always necessary or even desirable.

"How do you like the *Principe*?" Julius asked at last, glancing at the book that lay open on Leonora's knee. He had given it to her to read, because she said she knew so little of Italian thought.

"I hardly know," she said. "It is very wonderful, of course. But I cannot quite believe that Machiavelli believed in it himself, or that any one ever acted on the advice he gives. It is too complicated and unhuman."

"It always seems to me," said Julius, taking up the question, "that he wrote like a man who inferred a great deal from his own experience—a great deal more than it is safe to infer. He knew men and women very well. He might have been a despotic lover."

"Why?" asked Leonora.

“Do you notice that he always reckons, everywhere and without exception, on the heart of the people and on their personal affection for their sovereign? But he never takes into consideration the possible affection of the sovereign for his subjects.”

“That is true,” said Leonora. “He was a very heartless individual.”

“Perhaps—though I hardly think it,” answered Julius. “But he might have written a guide for despotic lovers much better than a book of instruction for tyrannical princes.”

“What an idea!” said Leonora laughing. “But I think he was heartless all the same. He only believed in the people’s hearts as a means for getting power.”

“He never says so,” said Julius. “I rather think he loved the people, and knew them well—but he loved the ingenuities of his wit much better.”

“If the heart does not come first, it never comes at all,” said Leonora thoughtfully. “If it does not rule it is ruled, and might as well never exist at all. Are you tyrannical, dear?”

She smiled at him, knowing how he loved her.

“Oh, yes, indeed,” said Julius, laughing; “but only about love.”

“But that is just the question,” said Leonora. “You ought not to be. Your heart ought to come first.”

“Yes, darling,” he answered. “The heart comes first, and the heart is a tyrant. Supposing my heart says to yours, ‘You shall love me; I will have it at any cost’; is not that tyranny?”

“Perhaps,” said Leonora, smiling and touching his hand. “But then it is quite a mutual tyranny, you know, because I say it to you too—and you do it.”

“I always do everything you say, darling,” he answered lovingly.

“Always?”

“Always;—and I always will, Leonora.”

“Do you think, Julius—it is a foolish question—do you think you would die for me, if it were necessary?”

“You know I would, dear,” he said quietly.

“Yes; I am sure you would,” she answered. “Do you know, I used to think that one ought to be willing to die for those one loves; and I like to think that you would give your life for me. Of course it could never happen—but then——Don’t laugh at me, Julius.”

“Why should I laugh?” he said. “What you say is serious enough, I am sure.”

“No—but I thought you might. You laugh at so many things—I am always afraid you will laugh at my love——”

It was five o’clock.

Marcantonio, issuing from the door in the garden wall, saw Julius and Leonora some twenty yards away, in the summerhouse. He gave the servant a franc for showing him the way, and the man retired. He stood alone, watching the pair, for he could see them very distinctly. They were so placed that they would see him if they turned and looked upward, but they did not move, nor hear him. Leonora was nearest to him, and was leaning back a little, so that she could not see him; Batiscombe held her hand, and was looking

at it, and gently caressing the fair, white fingers as he talked.

Marcantonio turned away for a moment and got out his revolver. It was clean and bright, and he had examined it—but he would look once more, just to be sure there was a cartridge in each chamber, especially in that one beneath the barrels. One could not be too certain of one's weapon. There was no mistake, everything was in order. The hour was come.

The hideous maniac smile played over his delicate features, and he stepped cautiously forward, holding the pistol behind him. Every step he gained before they observed him was an advantage. And besides, Leonora was between him and Batiscombe. It was not a fair shot, and it was too far.

He did not want to kill her—he would take her home with him, when he had killed Julius Batiscombe. He had told the little carriage to wait for them. How happy she would be! Cautiously he moved on, ready for action if they saw him. He trode so softly, so softly, it was like velvet on the grass.

Then, as he came nearer—not ten paces off—he brought his pistol before him and held it ready. So softly he had crept to them that they had not yet heard him, as the summer wind blew gently through the long grasses and the vines about the old bower, and made a sweet murmur of its own.

“——I am always afraid you will laugh at my love——” Leonora was saying, but the words that were to follow were never spoken.

Some slight sound caught her quick woman’s ear, and she looked up in the direction whence it came. There stood her husband, not ten paces from her, with an expression in his face that would have frozen the marrow in the bones of a wild beast.

The clean polished barrel of the pistol was pointed full at Batiscombe. Leonora saw that, and saw that Marcantonio’s eyes were fixed on her lover and not on herself. Batiscombe saw it all as well as she, one second later. But that one second was enough.

With a spring and a clutching turn, as a tigress will cover her young with herself and

turn glaring on her pursuers, Leonora threw her strong, lithe body upon Julius, forcing him back to his seat, and she turned and looked Marcantonio in the face. Their eyes met for one moment. But it was too late: the finger had pulled the trigger and the ball sped true.

Without a sound, without a cry, she fell upon her lover's breast. There she fell, there she died.

From the death wound the heart's blood fell in great drops; it fell down to the ground.

She died for his sake whom she loved; she died, she gave for him her life, the joy and the woe and the love of it, for his sake.

Do you ask what is the moral of this? Ask it of yourselves.

Ask it of that quiet man, with delicate features and snow-white hair, who drives in the Villa Borghese. He is well known in Rome for his honesty, his honour, and his unaffected

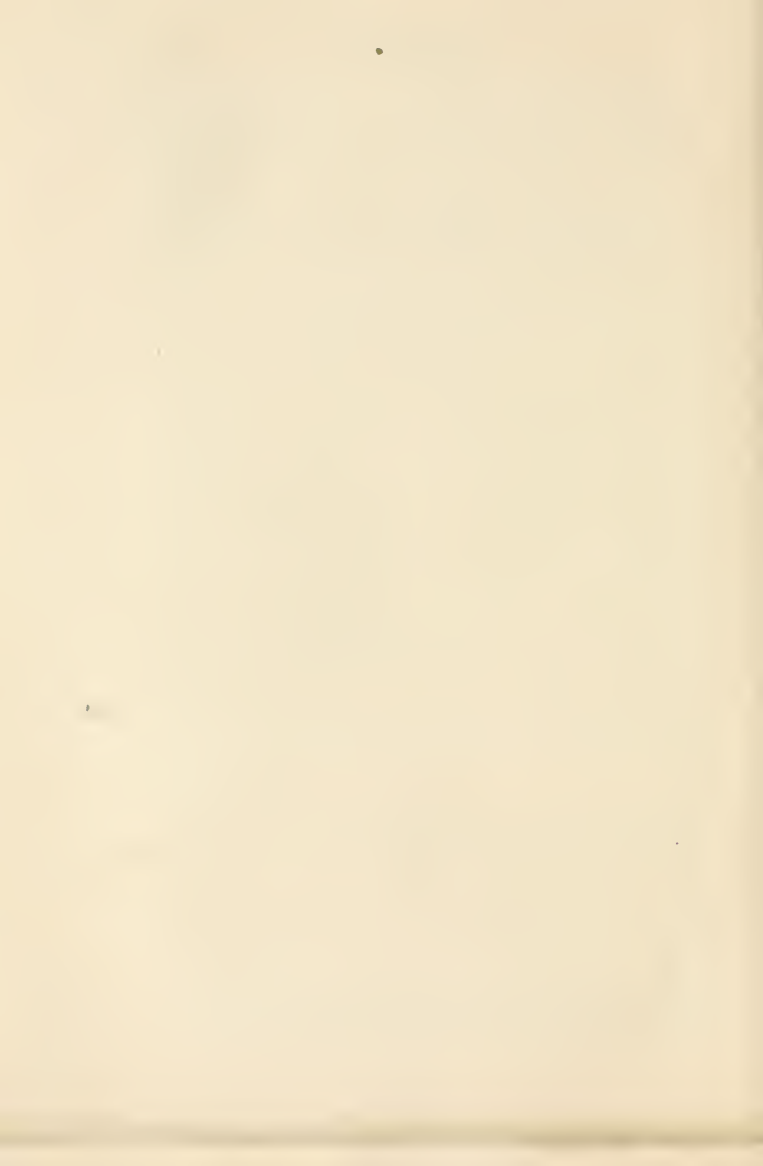
good sense. He is the Marchese Carantoni, he is Marcantonio, and he is not yet forty years of age.

Ask it of that magnificent ambassadress, queen of women and peer in all save royalty of the sovereigns before whom she represents the women of her husband's country. She is Diana de Charleroi—Duchesse de Charleroi now, for her husband has succeeded to the elder title. Ask it of her, the mother of brave boys and noble maidens. She has her beauty still, she is as stately as of yore, and grander in the crown of mature womanhood. But there is a streak of grey even in her fair hair, and a line of sorrow on her forehead, the masterly handwriting of a mastering grief; and her grey eyes are softer and sadder than they were ten years ago.

Ask it of Julius Batiscombe—but of him you will ask in vain. He has the mark of a bullet in his throat, Marcantonio's second shot, that was so nearly fatal to him. He stood aside from the world for a while, and lived a year or two among the monks of Subiaco; he manifested

some devotion for her sake who had died for him. And now he is writing novels again, and smoking cigarettes between the phrases, to help his ideas and to stimulate his imagination.

THE END.



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